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THE WIDE AWAKE GIRLS AT COLLEGE

"The freshmen ran after her, gleaning, receiving radiant smiles in return for their services."

FRONTISPIECE. *See page* 5.

THE WIDE AWAKE GIRLS SERIES

THE WIDE AWAKE GIRLS AT COLLEGE

BY

KATHARINE RUTH ELLIS

Author of "The Wide Awake Girls," "The Wide Awake Girls in Winsted," etc.

Illustrated by

SEARS GALLAGHER

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To L. C. H.

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Baker & Taylor

A THANKSGIVING

For the friendship of true women, Lord, that hath been since
the world had breath,
Since a woman stood at a woman's side to comfort through
birth and death, —
You have made us a bond of mirth and tears to last forever
and aye —
For the friendship of true women, Lord, take you my thanks
to-day.

Now much have I found to be glad of, much have I sorrowed
for,
But naught is better to hear than foot of a friend at the door,
And naught is better to feel than the touch of a sister hand
That says, "What are words between us — I know and may
understand."

For the friendship of true women, Lord, that hath been and
ever shall be
Since a woman stood at a woman's side at the cross of
Calvary;
For the tie of a kinship wonderful that holds us as blood-
bonds may —
For the friendship of true women, Lord, take you my thanks
to-day.

From "The Joy o' Life," by THEODOSIA GARRISON

PREFACE

THE author acknowledges gratefully Mrs. Theodosia Garrison's permission to reprint part of her poem "A Thanksgiving" as the keynote of this little story of girl friends.

She is equally glad to express her gratitude to Miss Lizette Reese for the privilege of quoting from and referring to her book of poems entitled "A Quiet Road."

It should also be stated here that the account of French college life is based upon "Les Sèvriennes" by Gabrielle Réval, published in Paris in 1905.

The story told by Catherine in Chapter Eleven is adapted from Vernon Lee's "Legend of Sister Benvenuta and the Christ Child."

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COLLEGE CALENDAR

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Christmas vacation begins at 3 P. M. . December 19.

WIDE AWAKE GIRLS AT COLLEGE

CHAPTER ONE

ROOM FORTY-SEVEN

"ALICE PRESCOTT, I've got it!"

Alice looked up from *The Historical Geography of the Holy Land.*

"What? Not measles, I hope."

"Are my cheeks so red?" Catherine settled herself among the couch cushions. "It's only excitement and talking. I tell you I've got, in the name of the Four-Ordained, *alias* Wide-Awake Girls, the full title to firewall parlor, Room 47."

The Historical Geography of the Holy Land fell lumbering to the floor.

"Not really? Catherine Smith, tell me all about it this minute! How did you ever bring it about? O, what will Hannah and Frieda say?"

Alice's near-sighted eyes were big with interest behind her thick glasses, and Catherine began her story, adjusting the pins in her red-gold hair.

"It's a vindication of the fashionable theory that what you really want you're bound to get.

It did seem settled that we could not have it after our bad luck in drawing and then Hannah's uncertainty about coming, but I haven't felt reconciled for a minute, and at last I calmly went down to call on those freshmen who have it, and told them the whole story. I even showed them your scrapbook with Hannah's original letter to *Wide-Awake* in it, and I told them how, though we belonged to each other in such a particular way, we had never been together more than one week in all our lives, and probably never could be again after this year, on account of Mrs. Eldred's plan to send Hannah and Frieda to Vassar next fall. It was Hannah's name that won them. All the freshmen seem to consider her perfect, and are as pleased as Punch to have her in their class."

"I know," agreed Alice. "She has a way with her! And isn't she growing good looking? Did you ever suspect she would turn out a regulation beauty?"

"No, I can't say I did, but she was mighty dear and sweet to look at when I first saw her. I'll never forget how rosy her cheeks were and the shy look in her 'Irish eyes' when Father brought her into the house that cold March day. Two and a half years ago! She's seventeen now, — almost grown up."

"Not inside," and Alice shook her head know-

ingly. "She'll never grow up, really. And if she does n't squeal over this news as wildly as ever, I'll be very much mistaken. Let's go and find them. Their Math class must be over. Won't Frieda be raptureful?"

"Or joysome, bless Her Stubbornness! If she had her way with the language, it would be consistent, at least!"

An hour later two freshmen lounged in a corridor window-seat of Main Hall, Dexter College, watching with interest the evacuation of Room 47 and its occupation by the new tenants. A tall, handsome girl with a coronet of red braids passed them, anxiously clutching the hem of her dull blue linen skirt, which was bundled about a heterogeneous collection of small articles, the wings of a statue of Victory protruding in one direction, a tennis racket in another, while jabots and toilet necessities dropped in her path.

The freshmen ran after her, gleaning, receiving radiant smiles in return for their services.

"She's great," sighed one of them, looking after her as she turned in at the open door of 47. "Every one says she'll be House President next year. I wish she had wanted our room. Those girls who changed with her are terribly set up. They say she's so grateful she'd do anything for them from now on, and there's not a girl in college with more

influence, not even Priscilla Perkins or Margaret Warren."

"She looks awfully kind, does n't she?" reflected the other. "I think she's the most beautiful girl in school, though Hannah Eldred is bewitching. And Mademoiselle Corinne says Frieda Lange is the living image of the Sistine Madonna or Princess Louise or some famous painting."

"Well, she may be, but I don't care for her style, myself. And how do you suppose they ever came to take up that homely little Miss Prescott? I don't care if she is President of Christians."

"'Sh! There she comes now. What has she got in that rocker she's dragging? A drop-light and a chafing-dish! It does seem to me that, for juniors, she and Miss Smith are showing precious little judgment in their moving."

"O dear!" The criticised junior, hearing the chafing-dish cover bang to the floor, stopped short and laughed over at the girls on the window-seat. "I do believe we have all lost our heads. You see, we thought we were settled for the year, Catherine and I in one end of the building, and Hannah and Frieda on the floor below in the other, and now the girls who had 47 have given it up to us. Was n't it lovely of them? It's the only parlor for four in the house and we had planned to have it over a year ago. And we're so excited

we simply cannot get in fast enough. The girls who are leaving have packed up properly, but we grab anything and take it. I made one whole trip with a little strawberry pincushion and met Hannah with her Latin dictionary and a glass of jelly. O, there she is with Frieda on the stairs,—trying to carry the bookcase with the books on the shelves! Won't you run and help them, please? They're wobbling awfully!"

"Of course!" The freshmen flew to their classmates' assistance, feeling important. With their help the shelves were finally brought into position in the little square parlor, the drop-light and chafing-dish disentangled from each other and a twining Egyptian scarf, and the last of Catherine's *objets d'art* distributed safely.

"I've got things all ready for tea," announced the blue-eyed, brown-haired Hannah. "And I want some right now. We don't need to work all the time, anyhow. Why not just swap rugs with our predecessors? I like this one well enough. And the pictures can wait awhile. You girls must stay and have tea, too. We'd have been on the floor in the corridor collecting books and bric-a-brac yet if it had n't been for you. Do you know everybody? My three-ordained sisters, allow me to present you to Mabel Bacon and Clarinda Rogers."

While she chattered, Hannah set up a swinging brass kettle, Frieda, flaxen-haired and serious, piled sweet wafers on a five-and-ten-cent-store plate, and Catherine daintily dusted a row of blue cups and saucers and tossed a lemon to Alice to slice.

Their guests, exchanging glances of congratulation at their good fortune in being thus, for the moment, included in the circle generally esteemed the most interesting in college, made themselves unobtrusively comfortable among cushions and hat-boxes in a corner, and watched and listened intently.

"I tried to bring in the last inhabitants for tea," said Hannah, "but they had classes and gym and did n't dare cut. Frieda, have n't we some olives? I can't find the bottle."

Frieda frowned a moment, then, her face lighting, overhauled a heap of shoes and produced the olive bottle from a tall riding-boot.

"And the corkscrew I thrust in my hair," she explained. "I will go and wash it in our own bathroom."

"That 's the most luxurious thing about this room," sighed Catherine. " Only two other people use our bathroom, and one of them is Aunt Clara's friend, the new French teacher."

"Who 's the other ?" asked Mabel.

"Reserved for a P. G. person who has n't come yet. Let's hope she'll prove Perfectly Grand," suggested Hannah.

"More likely she'll be a Positive Grouch or a Parsimonious Grind or a Pitiful Gump," discouraged Alice. "That water's boiling beautifully. Where's the tea?"

"If it's English Breakfast you want, I'm afraid I'm sitting on it," said Clarinda, whereupon they all laughed and Hannah explained that what she meant by having everything ready for tea was that the alcohol lamp was full.

Frieda passed the little cups in a moment, and the tired movers sipped contentedly.

"Do you remember that night on the campus two years ago," Catherine began dreamily —

"When we three drank lemonade out of yellow cups —" Alice continued —

"(Proceeds to go to the Endowment Fund) to Frieda's health and our meeting in Nineteen Hundred and When?" Hannah put in —

"While I was asleep at home in Berlin. And here it is Nineteen Hundred and Now! *Prost!*" and Frieda sprang to her feet and clicked her cup against those held out by the others.

"Do tell us about it," pleaded Mabel and Clarinda together. "How did you ever meet in the first place?"

The four exchanged smiles.

"We have had to explain so often," said Catherine, "that we have worked it out into an anthem effect with solos and trios and full choruses. To be sure, Alice is the only one of us who has a voice, and hers is contralto. The rest of us sing mediocre-soprano. Get your violin, Hannah. Don't mind tuning — it's superfluous. I've been longing for an unprejudiced audience!"

Mabel and Clarinda pinched each other with delight as they declared their willingness to undergo the anthem, and Frieda hunted up a curtain-pole for baton. Then, dolefully sounding the key-note, they proceeded to sing, to the air of "Annie Laurie:"

HANNAH, *sola:*
Massachusetts days were dreary,
And I was just fourteen.
So, being very lonely,
I wrote a magazine,
Wrote to a magazine.

THE OTHERS:
Her letter there we saw,
And to funny Hannah Eldred
Made answer, one and a'.

FRIEDA, *sola:*
My home was o'er the ocean —
ALICE:
And mine in Washington.
CATHERINE:
And mine was in Wisconsin.
HANNAH:
Their age was near my own.

A., C., F., *trio :*

And we, we could not bear it
That she should lonely be,
So to funny Hannah Eldred
We answered, all we three.

A., C., F., H., *quartet :*

Now we're at Dexter College,
Two freshmen, juniors two,
And to each of us the others
Have promised to be true.
Have promised to be true,
Which ne'er forgot will be,
And for each of us the others
Would lay them down and dee.

"How perfectly fascinating!" sighed Clarinda. "But I don't see how you ever managed to keep it up."

"We did n't," replied Frieda, "We flatted somewhat fierce. I don't believe we'll ever be able to sing it in parts, the way we should, and it's not half so funny doing it in uniform."

"It's my fault," Hannah giggled. "I forget the words, and so I hang on to the last note with my bow till I remember what's coming. I'll have to have them written out. I never could remember poetry!"

"Poetry!" Alice and Catherine groaned, but Mabel returned to questioning.

"I don't see how you kept up writing to each other, I mean, when you had never seen each

other. I wrote to a girl once, that way, but she did n't answer."

"O, do forgive her," begged Hannah. "My finger is callous yet from writing to all the girls who wrote to me. Mamma would n't let me leave one of them without an answer the first time. She said I had asked them to write and courtesy required me at least to tell them why I had changed my mind. There were thousands!"

"You see, Hannah was n't particular. She asked for any one about her own age," teased Alice.

"As bad as the Personal in the *Post* yesterday," put in Catherine. "'Wanted — A Roommate By a Congenial Lady.'"

"Have another cup of tea, anybody?" Hannah flourished the teapot. "You, Clarinda? Frieda? Mabel?"

"No more tea," replied Mabel, "but I do want to know more particulars about your story."

The others turned to Hannah, who shrugged her shoulders, lifted her eyebrows and began:

"I'm perfectly sure it's not my turn, but I always have to do it. So here goes. It was just a series of accidents. Mother and Frau Lange had been friends years before in Heidelberg. Frau Lange, seeing my letter, had Frieda answer it, and that put them in touch again. So, naturally,

when we went to Germany for the winter, we lived with the Langes *en pension*. As for Catherine, she and I had written pretty faithfully, just because we had happened to. I never knew why she and I kept it up when Alice and I did n't. And when Grandmother was ill and we came out to Delmar, where she lived, my uncle sent over to Winsted to call Dr. Smith in consultation, because he is one of the wonderfullest doctors that ever lived, and he took me home with him to visit. Then Father and Mother did n't know what to do with me, so they sent me over here for the spring term to get me out of the way, and Alice came in to button me up or something, out of the goodness of her heart, and lo and behold! she was she and I was I, and though we had n't heard from each other for months, there we were, living side by side in 61 and 63,— those dreadful little rooms they save for preps, you know."

"And as we all proved to be really congenial ladies," Alice finished, "we planned and contrived till we had a week together at Catherine's a year ago this summer, and now we are here as roommates, glory be!"

"Let 's drink the health of the freshmen who moved out for us," suggested Frieda. "I've got a few grounds left."

"They were dears to do it," said Catherine, pouring a little hot water into her cup to do the toast justice, "and though they are quite as well off where they are now (those are junior choice rooms, of course) and it was n't much of a sacrifice, I'd like to show them how we appreciate it."

"I heard you made them get out as a sorority stunt," suggested Mabel, feeling quite at ease now with these informal upperclassmen.

Catherine's eyes, which had been lazily closed as she critically tasted her hot water, suddenly flashed fire. "*What?*" she cried, sitting up with such a start that her back comb flew.

"Steady, Cathy," soothed Alice, patting her mildly. "You were misinformed, Mabel. None of us are sorority members, except Frieda, who is pledged Epsilon, but has n't been initiated yet. Dexter sororities don't ask such things as that of their pledges, anyhow."

The conversation was somewhat constrained after this unexpected turn, and the guests got themselves up out of their corner in embarrassment and took their departure.

"I 'll go along with you," said Hannah. "I'm going to wheel Allie's bureau down here. Lucia Carr, who took her room, said she was willing to exchange. No, I don't need any help. It will roll along like a hoop. Awfully glad you came

in. O, by the way," pausing as she was about to leave them, "I found when I was here that spring that it's not customary to mention sororities to the old girls, and we don't want our class making breaks, you know, so you might pass the word along. Come in sometime when we're settled, and we 'll give you tea properly."

"I don't see, for the life of me," mused Mabel Bacon, climbing the stairs slowly, "why she did n't get a bid to a sorority when she was here that spring. And as for Catherine Smith and Alice Prescott being barbs! They seem so nice. I wonder what's wrong with them."

"They *are* as nice as anybody in Pris Perkins' Delta or Margaret Warren's Epsilon, to my mind," objected Clarinda with spirit, "and if such girls as those are barbarians, there must be something wrong with the sororities. That's the way I look at it!"

CHAPTER TWO

THE P. G. PERSON

Main Hall was an old building more than once made over. Having originally served all purposes of the college, it had gradually given up one function after another, becoming at last a dormitory and nothing else. In putting in iron fire-doors at each end of the building, there had been made in one wing a large room which had been kept clear for dancing, and in the other the cozy little parlor, with four cubby-hole bedrooms opening from it, known as Number 47. Here at the end of the first week of the fall term the Wide Awake girls were comfortably established.

Two doors away lived the new French teacher, Mademoiselle Corinne Fasquelle, whose youth, charm and foreignness had combined to give her a popularity rivalled only by that of "Miss Eliot-bless-her-heart," for many years the ruling spirit of Dexter College. As Mademoiselle Corinne had been secured to the college by the good offices of Clara Lyndesay, a former student of the same generation as Dr. Helen Smith, and the ardently admired friend of Dr. Helen's daughter and her

companions, she had, of course, been instantly received into the hearts of her four neighbors, and her room was privately considered by them as an annex to Number 47.

Into this Paradise the serpent arrived one fair morning, with two small trunks as baggage.

Hannah and Frieda, returning from class, stopped to examine the trunks outside the door between their room and Mademoiselle Corinne's with frank curiosity.

"Flavia Eastman," read Hannah slowly, stooping over a tag. "That sounds familiar to me, but I can't quite place it. I wonder if it's anybody I've met anywhere. Would n't it be perfectly lovely if she should be a nice body?"

"We'll be lucky if she is only un-nice, and not horrible," remarked Frieda, opening the door of their own room and tossing her books and notebooks on the couch.

"But it does n't seem as though anybody not nice could be tucked into our dear little corner," Hannah protested, following. "I always get excited about new neighbors. She's a postgraduate, though, so she can't be very jolly. Probably she's just a studious person and won't matter to us one way or the other. O, Cathy, that you? Did you see the P. G.'s trunks in the alley-way? I know you did n't stoop to read her

name. It's fancy, Flavia Eastman. Makes you think of *The Prisoner of Zenda.* Throw me a pillow, Frieda. This chair is hard as rocks and I can't do Math unless I'm padded with pillows."

"Don't shout so, Hannah," pleaded Catherine. "Frieda's not deaf. O girls, you must be still."

Frieda had responded to Hannah's request for a pillow by throwing three in quick succession, and Hannah, now on her feet, was returning fire with vigor, shrieking whenever she was made to dodge.

Catherine attempting to interfere, they sat upon and smothered her. Alice sleepily opened her bedroom door in time to see a huge Harvard pillow fly straight out into the corridor and knock flat a severe-looking lady peering into the room.

Rubbing her eyes, Alice stumbled to the rescue, while Catherine thrust aside her subdued though chuckling captors, and rose.

Alice helped the stranger to her feet, murmuring apologies for the accident, and blinking near-sightedly after the crimson pillow.

The new-comer was more full of indignation than breath.

"Quite the most preposterous behavior!" she gasped between sneezes, for the Harvard pillow

had been dusty. "I was coming to protest against the noise. I shall report the matter to the President."

Catherine grew an inch taller.

"That will be quite unnecessary, Miss Eastman," she remarked in what Hannah termed her lemon-sherbet voice, (sweet and cool, and none too sweet, either!) "President MacArthur does not concern himself with such small matters. I am on the Self-Government Committee, and shall see that all that is necessary is done. Meanwhile, we earnestly beg your pardon. We were too noisy, but we are usually alone here as Mademoiselle Fasquelle is out all the morning. We will not disturb you in the future."

"It is to be hoped you will not! I understand now why I was assigned here, though it is farther from the library than I like. I shall see that quiet is maintained hereafter. Your names, please?"

Catherine, white with suppressed fury, gave her own, then stiffly presented Alice, absently clutching Harvard to her breast, and Frieda, who dropped a solemn German courtesy, thereby almost upsetting Hannah, coming reluctantly forward.

"I am surprised and pleased to see that you are continuing your education, Hannah," said Miss Eastman. "Did you enter without conditions?"

"Yes'm," answered Hannah meekly. "On examination. I did n't know you were a Dexter graduate, Miss Eastman."

"I am, and am taking my Master's degree this year, besides assisting in the Latin department. There comes the chambermaid. Is she habitually as late as this in the morning?"

As she pounced upon her new victim, the girls stole into the remotest of the four bedrooms, locking the door behind them.

Hannah drooped into a low chair, her usually merry mouth curving dejectedly downward.

"She was one of my High School teachers. I knew her voice the minute she spoke. I never knew anybody so dreadful. Every other teacher I ever had, even that awful Miss Violin Lyman, had something human inside somewhere, but this creature! Imagine her name being Flavia! It sounds like meringue or cream puffs or something romantic and fluffy. She ought to be Abigail or Sarah."

"I was right," said Frieda philosophically. "I said she would be horriful, and she is."

"I hope that's a comfort to you," said Catherine bitterly. "Report us to Prexy! I don't believe she ever heard of Self-Government. *Did* we make much noise, Alice?"

Alice smiled regretfully.

"I hate to side with the enemy, Cathy darling, but it woke me up. I was studying Philosophy, lying down to take it in better, and it put me to sleep as usual. I woke up, thinking there was a menagerie loose out here. You know I don't wake easily, Catherine!"

Catherine uttered a sad little moan. "O dear!" she sighed. "I detest being a proctor anyway, but to be one with two wild hyenas for roommates is more than I can bear. If I have to report myself again, that will make twice this term, and three times will put me out of office."

"Then you would n't be a proctor any more and could be comfortable," suggested Frieda cheerfully. "You've taken my name three times and Margaret Warren took it yesterday for sliding down the banisters. I suppose I'll be called up for this."

Catherine's face was clouded miserably. "It's a terrible pity. I'm failing somewhere. If I can't keep you girls straight, I ought to resign. You don't seem to realize how important it is, Frieda. It's a joke to you. You knew there was a trustees' meeting in the library when you slid down the banisters right by the door."

"There, there!" Hannah roused herself from her own gloom to draw Catherine into her lap,

while Alice put her arm around her, and Frieda dropped on her knees before her and kissed her hand, singing soothingly: "There, little proctor, don't you cry, I'll be a good girl by and by!"

"You see, Catherine," Hannah explained, "Frieda was brought up so strictly in Germany with all sorts of authorities over her, topping off with the Emperor himself, that American liberty has gone to her head. This is just what Miss Eliot calls reaction. If she does n't behave you can have the committee turn her over to Miss Eastman for a week. That would take the flightiness out of her. O dear, O dear," Hannah groaned again. "I'm just plain frightened of that woman. And so was Frieda. You made that *Knix* involuntarily, Frieda Lange!"

"Did it to make you laugh," denied Frieda, adding honestly, "My knees began before I quite realized it, though. She expects to be minded!"

"I mind her, that's sure," sighed Alice. "She's likely to spoil half our fun. Of course we should have had to stop the noise, anyhow, but I do hate the idea of such a sour person around in the way. Don't you know one pleasant thing about her, Hannah?"

"Not one. She squelched me every time I turned around. I never saw her outside the

school-room until to-day, and you saw how agreeable she was then!"

"Well," Catherine got up wearily, "I suppose she is human, and maybe we'll find a point of contact somehow. Meanwhile, it's luncheon time, and every hair in this house is out of order!"

CHAPTER THREE

HILDA

UNDER a big pine tree in the Hemlock Path Hannah sat with Hilda Maynard, Frieda's last year's roommate, the two diverting themselves with grave discussion of such uncomplicated topics as the desirability of marriage and the ethics of winning votes in class elections by smiles.

"We could have put Frieda in easily enough if she had taken the slightest trouble," declared Hilda. "But she doesn't like some of the girls and doesn't notice others, and she got so disgusted with the other crowd and the way they rushed all the doubtfuls that she wouldn't be halfway decent to her own friends all the week."

"It was a mistake to put her up," said Hannah. "But she's such a dear, and I thought she'd love having an office — in Germany a title of any sort is such a grand thing to have — and I hopped up and nominated her without considering the politics at all. Let me take your note-book and slide this worm off on it. He's too near my neck for comfort."

Hilda passed over a shoe-string-bound black book, and after dismissing the worm by its aid,

Hannah idly turned the leaves, and gazed at the printed schedule pasted inside the cover.

"Sometimes it seems as though college was everything but study, but when you look at that, study seems to take up all the hours and not leave a chink for anything else. Think of it! Right now over there in Morris Hall are classes in Pedagogy, History of Art and Middle High German, whatever that stands for! O yes, and one in Spanish. There's only one girl in that,— that romantic little Effie Hiscomb. I imagine she thinks she may have a love affair with a Spaniard sometime, and wants to be ready."

"She's learning to sing, to answer his serenades, too," said Hilda. "That was she screeching away in that room up there, where you gave us your violin concert that spring, you remember."

"I remember! When Miss Lyman shut me up to practise, and Inez brought you all over to listen. Inez was a trump. But that reminds me. I did n't include music in my bird's-eye view of the college, with steen pianos doing sonatas and scales and trills and arpeggios right in my ear. I suppose if we were nearer the chapel we'd hear the organ fuguing."

"And think of all the poor creatures in the library!"

"'Digging for kernels of knowledge,' as the

Winsted *Courier* said Catherine came to college to do."

"Sounds as though she were a squirrel or a nuthatch. And you and I are merely loafing."

"If you call getting a cross-section of a whole college at once intellectual loafing! My imagination aches," and Hannah lay back on the soft needles, her hands clasped behind her neck, her eyes lazily watching the sky, of which she caught blue glimpses through successive layers of branches.

Hilda sifted a handful of brown needles across her face and brushed them off again.

"What are you thinking now, dearest?"

Hannah scowled and bit at a needle that tickled her nose.

"Miss Lyndesay advised me not to call any one my 'dearest' for a few years yet. Said I could n't tell who was going to be, and it was a pity to squander superlatives. So I pass it on to you, Hilda child."

"Thanks awfully, grandmother Hannah, but would you mind telling what your aged mind is at present revolving?"

"Nothing much. It 's a pretty good old place, is n't it? Even if it does n't seem quite so big or important as it did when I came as a little prep. I wonder if Vassar will seem half as impressive

as this did. One thing is certain, I never can meet lovelier girls anywhere. They just don't make them. Don't you miss Lilian Burton and Dy-the? There is n't a voice in college that can take the place of Lilian's, and as for Dy-the I heard Miss Eliot say once that Dy-the's mission in life was to make sunshine prevail. I wonder if now that she's out in the hard, cold world, and is known as Miss Edith Allen, she's different? I had the dearest little visit with her on the train a year ago, and have n't heard from her since. I miss her more than any one or anything that I used to have here, unless it's Miss Eliot's story class. I wish I could be in that again instead of the grown-up History course. O dear!" Hannah's brown head came upright suddenly, scattering needles. "I clean forgot that bibliography she said to hand in. Good-bye, honey-pie. Here comes Margaret to play with you," and with an energetic carriage quite in contrast to her indolent attitude of a moment before, Hannah marched away toward the library, as Margaret Warren, senior president, and adored of freshmen, accepted Hilda's invitation to take the vacated seat.

"I wonder how it would seem to get the view of the human race that Hannah Eldred does," said Margaret musingly. "Every one she meets smiles. Dy-the Allen used to have that effect

on people. I'm glad there's some one on hand again to do it. I was n't here when Hannah was, before, you know, but I used to hear a lot about her. The girls never quite got over her refusal to come into Epsilon."

Hilda rolled over on her elbow and faced Margaret.

"Margaret, I'm only a pledge, and I suppose I ought to wait till I'm informed, but I really want to know the facts about those girls and the sororities."

"Well," said Margaret slowly, "I might as well tell you, since you're with them all such a lot. You have probably heard that Hannah was invited to both sororities and declined them both? I don't know positively about Delta, but our girls never doubted it. The reason she did it was because she could n't bear to be in all the fun when so many girls had to be left out. Of course the reason that side of it struck her so forcibly was that Alice was n't in. She's not a prepossessing girl, you know, and she was homesick and dressed very frugally, and it took some time to find her out, I understand. In fact, Dy-the told me that, while every one liked her well enough, no one waked up to her, so to speak, till Hannah arrived. After that, they wanted to invite her, but they had come to know her well

enough to be sure that after the course Hannah had taken she would never accept. She loved Hannah's doing as she did, too well. When Catherine Smith appeared, — that was my first year, too, though I was a sophomore, — it was funny to see how they rushed her. Delta stayed out, rather, because every one thought Catherine would go Epsilon, for some reason or other. But she would n't be rushed. She was dear and sweet and natural, but she made every one feel that she just would n't have it, till by and by they gave up, and were nice to her without any ulterior motive. Frieda is cut off from another piece of goods! She did n't see any sense in such delicate scruples and came along in without any trouble, just as you and I did and as most girls do."

Hilda laughed, though she still looked thoughtful. "Frieda certainly does n't waste her time being subtle," she agreed. "But she's the kindest when it comes to *doing* things that ever I saw. Rooming with her taught me that. I'd like all the girls in school to be in sororities, too, Margaret. I honestly would, but they would n't be, even if I stayed out!"

"They would n't," assented Margaret. "You are n't worrying about it, are you, Hilda? Of course, every kind-hearted girl is sorry for the

distinctions that hurt somebody, but that's the way the world is made."

"I know. If only it were n't Hannah Eldred —"

Margaret picked up her fountain pen and screwed its cap on tight. Then she stood up and shook the pine-needles from her skirt. "Hilda, my dear," she remarked, "it's all very well to admire Hannah Eldred, but if you let yourself get maudlin over her or any one else, if you begin to imitate her handwriting, for instance, or her style of hair-dressing, or I hear of your sending her violets, you'll hear from your older sorority sisters. One of the reasons we took you in was to protect you from your own tendency to make a goose of yourself now and then. Crushes don't go in Epsilon, Hildegarde Appleton Maynard!"

Margaret looked as though she meant what she said, though she uttered this pronouncement with burlesque solemnity. Hilda tried to feel vexed, but found herself unable, and when Margaret, declaring herself due at the laboratory, stooped and kissed her pouting lips, Hilda responded warmly, then, left alone, watched the departing figure with a keen sense of refreshment and vigor.

"Next to Hannah —" she murmured. Then with a chuckle at her own incorrigibility, she opened her note-book and began to scribble a letter home.

"Hello! What's your name?"

"Hilda. What's yours?"

It was a small boy in a Russian blouse suit who had addressed her, holding by the hand a little girl in a pink gingham dress. After a moment's rather judicial consideration, the boy replied to Hilda's question.

"Hawold, just like God's. This is my sister. Her name's Huldah, 'most like yours, but I'd rather have my name be like God's than like yours."

"I should think so," murmured Hilda. "How do you make it out, your name being like — like that, you know?"

"Why, don't you know? Don't you say your prayers when you go to bed? 'Hawold be Thy name.' I should think a girl as big as you ought to know that much. What you doin'?"

"Writing a letter. What are you and Huldah doing?"

"Hiding, so Jonathan Edwards can't find us. Are n't us, Huldah?"

The little girl, who had seemed to feel that the conversation was getting on nicely without her aid, now pursed her lips tightly and tried to loosen her brother's grasp on her wrist.

"You'd better hurry," remarked Hilda. "I hear Jonathan's whistle now."

The children slipped into the shadowy deeps of the hemlocks, Huldah dragging back a little, but plainly no match for Harold, either in strength or purpose.

Hilda waited the oncoming Jonathan with interest. The son of President MacArthur, and christened Bruce, the boy had years ago been dubbed Jonathan Edwards as a consequence of some slight college joke, and in accordance with the mysterious law which governs such things, had retained it through succeeding generations of big-sisterly girls. He was not, apparently, much interested in the pursuit of Harold and Huldah, and at Hilda's greeting perched himself on the edge of a stump and taking out his knife proceeded to engrave his initials in the flat surface.

"What a big fellow you are!" remarked Hilda. "When I first came here, you were n't much bigger than Harold. Who is he, anyway?"

"My cousin. I wish he was n't."

"Why!"

"He 's a blasphemer. I don't like *them*."

"O, I'm sure he does n't mean to be. He 's just a little boy and does n't know any better. Can't Huldah talk?"

"Lots. She 's nice, but Harold won't let go of her. They're visiting us. Wish they'd go home. Huldah and I've got a secret, and Harold 's trying

to find it out, so he holds on to her, and she won't talk for fear she'll tell it."

"I see. What kind of a secret?"

"You don't catch me telling." Jonathan finished his A and flipped the chips away. "I guess I'll go and find them."

"Tell Harold to come back here to me. I'll have a secret with him, and then you and Huldah can have yours all alone."

Jonathan hesitated, slowly shutting his knife. "What kind of a secret you going to have? Maybe I'd rather have yours."

"Dear no, you would n't. It's just a secret for little boys. Go and find them, and I'll wait here, and maybe to-morrow I'll think of a secret big enough for you,"

"Well." Jonathan, with his hands in his pockets, strolled down the path, shouting: "King's X! Come here, Harold. I've got something to tell you."

"They must be the children of that flyaway body I saw driving with Mrs. Prexy. I never thought of a college president's having cousins. Now what can I have for a secret with that blasphemer?"

Fudge seemed the easiest thing to think of, and its charm was sure. Therefore, a few minutes later, Huldah, released, was running away

with her cousin, chattering like a magpie, while her masterful brother was stirring fudge in Hilda's chafing-dish in Main.

"Why, here you are, Hilda," exclaimed Frieda, opening the door and coming in with a load of books. "Why on earth did n't you come to Hygiene?"

Hilda's face changed from light-hearted content to dark despair.

"Frieda, it 's the first time this year. Of course, I just forgot. But what is the use of saying so? They don't believe me, or if they do, it makes them all the angrier. It 's always true. What can I do? I can't afford to flunk anything. I'm just on the ragged edge."

"Might take Dr. Weed some of this fudge. It 's ready to cut now."

"I'll take her some," said Hilda drearily, "but she probably does n't think chocolate is sanitary! It would be just like my luck. I don't see why Dexter does n't have a system of cuts."

"It would take more than that to save you," commented Frieda carelessly, sampling the fudge. "You cut by accident seven times last year, and I saved you times innumerous. If I were you, I'd do something about it, Hilda."

"If you were I, you 'd realize what a miserable, humiliating thing it is to be forgetful, and you'd

have a little sympathy with people. Do something about it! Don't I carry my schedule around wherever I go? Don't I wear my ring on the wrong finger so much that I can't remember which is the right one? Have n't I tied strings around my thumb till it's turned purple and then not had the least idea what they were there for? Have n't I tried and tried and — prayed about it? And all any of you do is to scold or laugh at me. It's a deformity, I tell you, like being color-blind or hunchbacked."

Hilda's voice rose with the vehemence of her feeling, and a head appeared in the doorway.

"Really, Hilda, it's study hours and I'm afraid you're forgetting it. By the way," Priscilla Perkins came into the room and shut the door, "when did the tailor say I should come for my fitting?"

"O Pris, I forgot to ask him. I 'm so sorry. I'll go right now and find out. I will. I will. I'm *so* sorry!" Hilda rushed for her hat, and then, seeing a lurking smile in Frieda's eyes, suddenly burst into tears.

Frieda, full of compunction, and Priscilla, surprised but sympathetic, stood awkwardly, uncertain what to do, but Harold jerked Hilda by the sleeve.

"Now I guess you're forgetting me," he declared

plaintively. "I'm are n't having any fun at all. You said we'd have fudge and fun, and we've just had fudge and you 're a-crying!"

All three girls had to laugh at that, and Hilda, wiping her eyes hastily, caught Harold up in her arms and tossed him ceilingward while Frieda filled a small box with fudge.

"There!" she said, as she fitted the cover down and ate a few crumbs. "Hilda must go to Dr. Weed's to apologize and explain, and I'm going with her, and then we're going down town to see Prissie's tailor — yes, yes, we want the walk, Pris, don't derive us of it! And when we get home, I'll look up Hilda's engagements and tell her what to do next. Now run away, little boy, with your box of fudge, and be careful what you do around this college nowafter. Show him how to get out of the house, won't you, Pris, if you're going downstairs?"

Then, as Priscilla led the somewhat reluctant Harold away, and Hilda poured water into the messy chafing-dish, Frieda piled the neatest squares of candy on a plate for Dr. Weed's propitiation, saying cheerfully as she did so:

"It's lucky you did n't go to one of those coeducative colleges, *liebes Kind*, if one little *Männchen* makes you forget all things!"

CHAPTER FOUR

AFTERNOON TEA

"'HAIL to thee, blithe spirit!'"

"Gosh!"

Recoiling with characteristic ejaculations from the shock of unexpected impact, Catherine Smith, student, and Genevieve Maloney, waitress, faced each other and viewed in silence a mixture of tea-tray, Shelley's *Complete Poetical Works*, loaf sugar and broken china, sliced lemon and sprawling papers, the whole fused with ink and cream.

"'Bird thou never wert!' I beg your pardon," murmured Catherine, stooping to sort out the incongruous elements.

"Faith, and I niver see you, Miss. I was just coming along."

"So was I, but I'm more to blame than you, for I should n't have been reading while I walked. There's some sugar under the window."

Down the corridor came a slight, erect young woman, dark hair parted low on her forehead, deep dark eyes, and a flexible sensitive mouth.

"*Quelle dommage!*" she exclaimed as she reached the scene of disaster. "My afternoon tea is

spilled, Catherine!" There was the faintest difficulty with the "th," but the smile and vibrant voice were charming..

"The tea ain't here itself," explained Genevieve, scrabbling lumps of sugar into the uninjured bowl with a large red hand. "I thought you had that yourself. These here's all right now, all but the cream, and I 'll get more of that in a jiffy."

"Please do, since the jug is broken. Won't you share my cup with me, Catherine? I have sugar and a lemon of my own, which we will use in place of this rather dusty supply and yet not hurt Genevieve's feelings."

"I'd love to come, and I will. I was going to the library to read up on Shelley, but it can wait perfectly well. Did you hear me when I bumped into her? I was starting the *Skylark* and I said 'Bird thou never wert!' "

"Bird she never was, I am certain," laughed Mademoiselle Corinne as she ushered her guest into her room. "And what did she say?"

"Something you must not learn. The trustees would ask for your resignation if you were heard to say it, but unless you play around with Genevieve, I think you're safe. Do you have afternoon tea all by yourself every day, Mademoiselle Corinne?"

"Often. Sit here, my dear, where you will be

more cozy, and let me put your books and papers out of sight. I am weary of books and papers. The cream has stained your fine green poet, I fear. There! Now we are comfortable, is n't it true?"

Mademoiselle Corinne seated herself at a little inlaid table opposite Catherine in a long lounging-chair, and measured out the tea into a graceful Dresden pot.

"Yes," she repeated. "I do have tea every afternoon usually, and much oftener alone than I could wish. It is not the tea I care for, so much as the sense of being *chez moi*, you know."

"It is dear and cozy here," sighed Catherine, looking about. "I love your ferns, and you have so many beautiful photographs."

"Too many, but I had to cover as much of the frightful wall-paper as I could. After Christmas I shall have it changed. I now keep my desk near the window, so that when I glance up from writing it is into tree-tops, else my letters would be bitter and pessimistic."

"It is pretty bad, but it was the style the year it was done, and the girls who had it put on probably thought they were very fine."

"The style? Red walls with gilt trimmings and a pea-green band above? If red eyes should be proclaimed fashionable, some people would

try to secure them, I have no doubt. But let us leave such a painful topic. I had a letter to-day from Miss Lyndesay."

Genevieve's arrival with the tray suspended Catherine's reply for a minute, but it came with undiminished joy. "Really? Do tell me all about her. I have n't seen her for ever so long and don't hear regularly at all."

"Is this a jiffy?" Mademoiselle Corinne puzzled, as she scrutinized the commonplace little cream-pitcher. "I cannot see any respect in which it differs from a jug. This mysterious English!"

Catherine gayly interpreted Genevieve's idiom, and returned to her queries about her friend.

"She sent you *mille bonne amitiés.* You may take the letter and read it at your idleness — that is not what I mean, your *loisir*, leisure, that is it! The letter is like herself, delightful."

"Is n't she?" Catherine leaned forward to take her cup. "Please, please tell me everything you can about her. Tell me where you saw her first, and what she wears and what she says and how she looks. I never in my life have heard enough about her."

"I don't wonder you love her. I met her early in the summer at a little fishing village in Flanders, quite unknown to tourists. I had gone there to be alone and rest, away from teaching and from

harrowing experiences. I had found it a safe refuge once before, and the year had been a very hard one for me, — my first as teacher in the government schools after the delight and liberty of college."

The dark eyes grew grave and the slim brown hand trembled a little as it turned out the flame under the kettle.

"You cannot imagine how different it all was, Catherine. You see, French girls are only beginning to demand education. Until a few years ago, a French girl with any pretension to social standing never thought of school beyond the convents or private governesses. Now we are breaking away from the old ideas, the old religion, the old methods. We have our women's colleges, like and unlike this of yours. I went to Sèvres much against the wishes of my family. They were scandalized because I was unwilling to sit down and wait at home for some one to come and marry me. I am not boring you?"

Catherine shook her head for answer, listening eagerly, and Mademoiselle Corinne went on.

"I should like to tell you. You will understand better what your Miss Lyndesay was to me. Though my family discouraged me, and wept over my decision, I insisted on trying the competitive examinations, and as I made a good

rank, it was not so difficult to persuade them to let me go for three years to Sèvres. They were wonderful years. I loved the place from the first day,— the old building where we lived, with its high solemn façade, its court and terrace and its fountain."

She rose and, taking two or three photographs from her desk, handed them to Catherine. "My little room was on the top floor, as this is, but our building was higher, and it looked out on a sandy court with the tall sycamore trees. I shall never forget that little white room, where so many great experiences came to me. Free intercourse with eighty other girls from all parts of France was something very new and exhilarating, but, after all, it was the new worlds opened up by the studying and the classes that mattered. Our masters were some of the best in France, and they gave us the full strength of their philosophy. I am not sure it is wise, — such strong meat for minds so newly set free from the bonds of tradition inherited through generations. But wise or not, it was glorious! The act of thinking was delight. We tested all things, nothing was too accepted, too revered for us to try it by our new standards."

"But I don't believe we ever think much about things," protested Catherine. "You make college

seem much more important, the study part, I mean."

"We were more serious than you. You seem to me children, but it is natural. The whole situation is different. You have made no sacrifices to come here, in the first place. There is no breach between you and your families. You have not cut loose from your traditions. In fact, coming to college is one of your traditions. I have discussed the matter much with Miss Lyndesay, and I understand. There is one other difference I notice. We expected to earn our living by teaching, and the positions were largely dependent upon our rank in the final examinations. You girls are going home after a few years to resume your places at your fathers' firesides or to make homes of your own. Few of you are impelled by need to study. At Sèvres the girls are seeking training. I consider it now strange training. The most daring philosophy a preparation for teaching the little children of workingmen to recite fables!"

Catherine sat silent, her own eyes fixed upon the great dark ones, filled now with emotion while the mouth was sternly set.

"We, happy at Sèvres, yet heard disquieting rumors of danger ahead. One of my friends, my closest companion all my first year, went out to

a school in a remote province and suffered martyrdom. The village people looked upon her askance. A woman who knows what is in books cannot also be good, according to the ideas of many of my ignorant countrymen. Isabelle wrote me what she did not dare write to her family, who, like mine, had felt disgraced by her decision to teach, though in her case it was necessary, as there was no more money than was needed for the little ones. Isabelle had to pay in advance a heavy deposit in order to secure board and lodging in the village. Her landlady, a tailor's wife, searched her room in her absence. Isabelle expressed it by saying that she dusted even the letters in the bottom drawer of her bureau!"

"It does n't seem credible," protested Catherine softly.

"One washerwoman, to whom I sent my lingerie when I went out to teach, returned it unwashed because she detected the odor of orris root and said respectable women did not use perfumes. I am telling you only the truth, Catherine. But all this was trifling. The worst was at the school itself. Isabelle loved her work. She loved little children. She set herself to succeed, and to save them from the fearful ignorance around them. But she succeeded too well. The other teachers and the directress of the school were old-fashioned,

jealous of the new-comer, and they resented the love the children gave her. They persecuted and tormented her, and at last —" Mademoiselle Corinne's eyes grew black and she finished solemnly — "at last they falsified reports. The school was under imperfect inspection. The directress had influence. Isabelle's license was revoked and she took her own life."

Catherine drew a long breath of horror, but ventured no word.

Presently Mademoiselle Corinne went on.

"I could tell you other facts as incredible to you, but there is no need. The educated woman is lonely in France. Often she is driven to desperate acts. It is a terrible strain, this sudden mental emancipation, and then the sudden plunge into a society which is antagonistic. American women can scarcely imagine it. In another generation, of course,— but we are living in this! Some of us are weak and go back to the old ways, some of us by good fortune are spared sorrow, but some, too honest to compromise, lose heart altogether. I am not an entertaining hostess to-day, I fear. Another day you shall come and we shall be gay together. Is it not so?"

"Please tell me more," begged Catherine. "I can be gay any day. To-day I need to know all you will tell me. You finished and went to teaching?"

"Yes, it was my turn to leave the dear old place, to say good-bye to all the queer little customs I had laughed at and yet loved, the Good-night for instance. What would you think, if at half-past eight every evening you were all expected to leave whatever you were doing, and gather in a long red-bricked and whitewashed corridor outside Miss Eliot's room, to be admitted, one by one, to tell her Good-night? Sometimes we were kept waiting an hour and more."

"You were n't free as to rules then? The liberty was all intellectual?"

"By no means. We had much freedom about going and coming, as much as you, I think, but different. The *Bonsoir* was not a requirement, only what you call 'good form.' Tuesday was our holiday, and Sundays we often went away for the day. I do not think, however, that your student officers would enjoy having a teacher inspect rooms?"

Catherine smiled. "Hardly, though it might be good preparation if one were to go to teach in the provinces! I can't imagine a teacher being willing to do it for grown-up girls. Did you do anything for fun?"

"Fun? You mean amusement? Much. We were girls and there was much joking and mirth. Also we danced. We had a long bare room, with

waxed floors as you have, and we danced there every evening. I had an odd fancy about the school at that hour. The avenue of chestnut trees looked to me like the great foot of a cross of shadow, lost in night; the class-rooms formed the arms, and the bright, joyous dancing-room was the heart. And after the dancing, when the sleepy ones had gone to bed and the ones you would call 'grinds,' I think, had returned to their books (our slang for them is 'wood-choppers'), the rest of us would sit about and chat and make songs about our professors and discuss endlessly, as you girls do. I often peep in on you, dancing down in the big room at the other end of the building. If it had a few engravings on the wall and a wicker chair or so along the side, instead of that sofa like a camel, it would seem exactly like our old *salle de réunion.* French girls and American are very much alike when they are dancing!"

"Won't you please come down and dance with us, to-night?" pleaded Catherine. "I'm sure it would seem like old times to you, and we would all love to have you. Aunt Clara said you were not much older than we are, Mademoiselle Corinne!"

"I am not quite three years older than yourself, but sometimes I feel as though I belonged to an earlier generation," confessed the French girl, and Catherine answered sympathetically:

"I don't wonder! Did you have a hard time teaching?"

"Yes, and yet not at all hard, compared with Isabelle's. My directress was a competent, kind woman, and the work was not too strenuous, but I found myself very worn at the close of the year and was glad to get away to the seaside. I had planned to sit all day in the woods or by the water and read poetry till my soul should be at peace again. You love your poets, Catherine. Some day you must know ours. The second day at the table in the little inn, the only boarding-place in the village, there appeared among us a girl with the most dreadful facial deformity I have ever seen. It was of a hideousness! I could not eat a mouthful and went away as soon as I could to protest against her admittance there. But I found that her father, a man of wealth, had paid a large sum in advance and that she was to stay the whole summer. The girl had been loathsome from birth, and her father farmed her out by seasons. It was plain that if I did not like the situation I must leave. I made up my mind to do so the next day. I walked far that afternoon, and, coming back toward dusk, chanced upon the girl sitting alone on the sand with a book. The side of her face toward me was inoffensive and her expression was sad and sorrowful.

My first impulse was to pass her quickly, but a second, less selfish one caused me to stop and ask her about the book she held. It was a group of unusual little essays, of which I am very fond, one of my *livres de chevet*, what you call bed books. You must read it sometime. She spoke lovingly and intelligently of the book. Her voice was sweet and her manner good, and I have never heard purer, more exquisite French than hers. She has lived alone with books all her life, and by some miracle has saved herself from sourness. Her literary instinct is surprisingly sure and true, and though she is a girl of only sixteen I find myself depending absolutely upon her judgment of a book. She chooses and sends new books to me now that I am here."

"You did n't go away and leave her then?" Catherine put the question smilingly.

"No, and the next week I was rewarded, for your Miss Lyndesay arrived."

"O, what a good time that poor girl must have had!"

"She did. She was supremely happy, having companionship. And she was very tactful indeed, leaving us alone much of the time. Miss Lyndesay and I were drawn to each other from the first. She felt, as I did, the pathos of the situation. I have enough of the teacher in me to make such a

pupil seem an opportunity rather than a burden. I would embroider or lie on the sand watching the waves, while Miss Lyndesay sketched and Hortense read aloud to us, secure in the knowledge that we were not looking at her. We spent delightful twilight hours together. She would listen to our talk and ask us questions that would break our hearts. I had a letter from her last week. She writes regularly, and I reply, even if all other engagements are neglected. She is definitely training herself to be a writer. Miss Lyndesay is allowing her to write to her in English, and correcting her letters, but I know she finds it a burden, for she cares not at all for teaching, and is not given to letter-writing, herself."

"O, I wish I might do it," cried Catherine, her eyes shining with pleasure. "I should love it, and I would make another friend for Hortense and it would save Aunt Clara. Don't you think I could?"

"I'm sure you could. We'll arrange it at once. Hortense would be blissful to have a girl friend. I have told her about you four and the merriment you have."

"I'll get the others all into it, and we'll send her things — O, it will be the most delightful interest. We all became friends through letters ourselves, so it would be very appropriate, and

when she is a famous French writer, we'll be tremendously proud of knowing her."

"It would sound like a fairy-tale to the little French girl," said Mademoiselle Corinne, rising with Catherine. "She has no girl friend in the whole wide world, except the little Lotte, one of the village children whom she has taken for a maid. She used to accompany us all and learned not to fear Hortense. In this last letter Hortense says she will spend the winter there and some of the women are teaching her to make lace. She is so kind-hearted they can't help loving her when they know her. Good-by, my dear," as Catherine put out her hand. "I hope you will come in often, and bring the others. Mona Lisa comes frequently alone —"

"Frieda? I did n't know it."

"No? I think she fears I may be a little homesick, and we can sympathize with each other, the ocean's width between us and our native lands. Hannah I know well, partly from Miss Lyndesay's accounts and partly from my own observations. But the other, Miss Prescott, escapes me, though I have her in one of my classes. She is very quiet."

"She's quieter there than anywhere else, I imagine," Catherine explained. "She says her French is so bad it's vicious! She told me that

your reading made her think of running water, and her own of sawing wood."

Mademoiselle Corinne made a little gesture of despair. "I could bless her for reading slowly. Most of the young ladies gallop over the lines and every sound is wrong, all wrong."

"You'll not find teaching all roses here," said Catherine warningly. "I'm glad I'm not taking French, for I want you for a friend! Don't forget that you are to dance to-night. We'll pretend we are all *Sèvriennes*."

CHAPTER FIVE

ROMANCE AND BITTERSWEET

"All the week is worth while for the sake of Saturday," cried Hannah, dancing down the steps of the big east veranda, followed more sedately by Hilda, Catherine, Alice, Frieda and Margaret.

"Can you all get in here?" asked a man who had driven up to the veranda in a surrey.

"Of course," answered Hannah. "Three on a seat, and two of us can walk if it gets crowded. I'm going to drive part of the time, Catherine."

"The horses aren't afraid of autos?" asked Margaret cautiously.

"How are they about airships?" asked Frieda gravely, as the man reassured Margaret.

"They don't mind 'em if they see 'em, but they do sometimes shy a bit when they're hit by potato peelin's out of the sky," he replied quite as gravely.

"I am to drive," said Catherine crisply, "and Hannah and Hilda can get in here with me, but I should judge Margaret and Alice would both be needed to keep Frieda straight. What *did* you joke with him for, Frieda?" she worried,

crowding herself between Hilda's right knee and Hannah's left one and guiding the horses decorously along the elm-shaded driveway, as the man walked off across the lawn.

"Margaret was such a goose to ask him about autos," Frieda defended herself. "Soon horses will be such a curiosity that the autos will be afraid of them. I'm glad I didn't wear a hat. It would have scraped the top of the carriage."

"Hats are almost as out of date as horses, I suppose," said Margaret, "but I've never been able to break myself of my early habits. There! when you get outside the lodge, you feel that you really are off for a lark, don't you?"

It was a merry drive, through the quiet little village streets, across the river and out into the beautiful open country, level fields rolling away to the sky-line where low hills, tree covered, showed soft autumn colors against a clear summer blue. The girls, all talking at once, laughing often, were keenly alive to the beauty and the delight of a long free day.

"Not a committee meeting. Think of it!" Catherine slapped the reins in satisfaction.

"No mail to deliver. Wasn't Pris good to offer to do it?" Alice contributed happily.

"I don't know," said Hilda. "She loves letters,

"It was a merry ride through the quiet little village streets."—*Page* 54.

no matter whose. Says she can't imagine not wanting to read other people's mail, so I suppose sorting it will give her some pleasure."

"Hope she does n't read it," said Margaret.

"She could mine, for all I care," declared Hannah. "So could anybody. Dad and Mamma and Karl are the only correspondents I have. I'm living with all my others!"

"You won't get a letter from Karl to-day," put in Frieda. "It's my turn. I fixed him a calendar last Christmas with our weeks marked on it, so he would n't get mixed up, and it has worked nicely."

"He did n't have to write to you in the vacation, did he?" asked Catherine, interested. "I thought he was with you a large part of it."

"So he was," explained Hannah. "He came out to the cottage at the shore every Sunday, but we divided him up according to the calendar just the same. One week he'd pay attention to Frieda and the next to me."

"Why did n't you share him?"

"Because he and Frieda want to talk German all the time, and I like him better in English. And besides we always quarrel over him, so Mamma suggested taking turns. Once I sold my turn to Frieda for a dollar. It was almost the last of the month and I was awfully hard up."

"How did Karl like that?"

"O, he thought it was a joke. He always thinks we're jokes. There were two or three grand men there this summer, and they tried to call on us and treat us like grown-up girls, but Karl thought it was so humorous they gave it up. I get quite cross with Karl sometimes," said Hannah meditatively, "but I'm so used to him I could n't get along without him."

"You'll have to when he goes back to Germany next year," remarked Frieda complacently.

"I wish"— Margaret's voice had a plaintive note in it — "you would please tell me explicitly who this mysterious young man is. I often hear you mention him, and I can't at all make him out. He is n't your brother, is he, Frieda?"

"Only my half-brother," answered Frieda. "The other half is Hannah's."

"I'll explain, Margaret," said Alice. "Frieda is so impish to-day that she can't be trusted, and it 's really very simple. Karl's other name is Von Arndtheim, and he lives in Berlin, in the apartment just below the Langes'. When Hannah was there the three of them played around together a lot, because Mr. Von Arndtheim — Karl, not the father — had hurt his leg and could n't go out, and the girls were good to him. Then later he came over to Harvard and naturally the Eldreds have

seen him often. He calls Hannah and Frieda '*die Kinder*,' and I don't wonder!"

"Why don't you have him out for the Prom?" suggested Margaret, and Hilda chimed in:

"Do. I fell in love with his picture last year, and I'm crazy to see him."

But Hannah and Frieda scorned the idea.

"He'd laugh at us for wearing our hair up."

"He'd send us alphabet blocks instead of roses. No, sir, I'd ask one of Catherine's nice Winsted boys if I were going to ask anybody. They don't think a seventeen-year-old girl's an infant."

"Which would you take?" asked Catherine. "O dear, I wish these horses were n't so fond of each other. They keep rubbing noses. Which would you choose, Hannah, Max or Archie?"

"Bert Wyman."

"No," cried Frieda. "I want Bert myself."

"O, you dreadful, squabbling babies!" sighed Alice. "You did n't want Bert at all till you heard Hannah say she did, Frieda Lange. Honestly, Catherine, why could n't we all club together and ask the Boat Club boys? Don't you think they'd like it?"

"Whom do you mean by 'us'?" asked Catherine. "Margaret has her plans made, of course."

"Of course. You need n't wear your ring with the stone turned in, dear! But you must let

every one of us have a dance with him, and we'll show you some nice boys, ourselves. Those Winsted boys are awfully nice, are n't they, girls?"

"Indeed and indeedy," agreed Hannah. "And there are enough for us all, including Hilda. Are n't there? Let's see: Bert and Algernon and Max and Archie and Tom. I don't know Tom very well, but you could take him, Catherine."

"He would n't be very likely to come, he's so busy, but he might. And the only way Archie could would be if the Prom came in his spring vacation. He's at Yale this year, you know, but our vacation is almost always earlier than that of the eastern colleges, and the Prom comes right after it."

"I could n't ask one of them," declared Hilda. "I don't know them."

"But you're just the sort of dainty pretty slimness that Archie Bradly likes. Don't you think Hilda would please him, Catherine?"

Catherine laughed. "He'd have poor taste if she did n't. But I believe Alice's idea is a good one, to syndicate ourselves, so to speak, and invite the boys all together. I don't quite feel like taking the burden of Algernon, for instance, entirely on my own shoulders."

"What a name!" groaned Margaret, but Alice met her cheerfully:

"It's worse when you know the whole. His last name is Swinburne. His mother's a little queer, but Algernon is all right, only a trifle heavy. He's the librarian at Winsted in the library Catherine started. Divided up, he would n't be so hard. The idea grows on me, Catherine."

"There is n't any reason why we should n't do it, if we want to," declared Catherine. "Let's engage Mademoisellle Corinne right away for chaperon. Margaret, you and your Frank will come to lunch with us, won't you?"

"Gladly, if you're not afraid of thirteen at table. I should consider it an honor to be associated with such an original scheme. You must call yourselves the Prom Partner Company, Limited."

"An enterprising girl with a wide acquaintance among college men might do a good business running an agency, might n't she?" suggested Alice. "I like taking the boys this way, because with a share in five you can be wholly pleased. The poor dancers are often good talkers, and a handsome man sometimes can't afford to send lovely flowers, but this way we 'll all have all the good things."

"But I shall have Bert," declared Frieda, and Catherine, to prevent disaster, called a halt for luncheon.

The ostensible aim of the expedition had been

bittersweet, a fact to which, after the last paper plate had been consumed by the scavenger bonfire, Hilda, pluming herself upon being the one to remember, called the attention of the others.

"Mademoiselle Corinne has never seen any, you know, and we promised to take her some. She thought the name was so pretty."

"Yes, and I thought we could drive around by Mrs. Langdon's on the way back and leave her a few sprays. She would n't want many, for she never cares to have things like that around, but I know she would appreciate our thinking of her and I have n't been over for more than a week," said Alice.

"She seems much frailer this year, does n't she?" said Catherine, eating a left-over cooky to save it. "Mother looked rather solemn about her when she was down last week. Said she hardly thought she ought to live off there alone, though of course the servants are faithfulness personified. Don't you think she has grown milder in her manner, too?"

"Perhaps. Or perhaps we have learned to know her better. She made some very scathing comments on my wearing a wee little mouse of a rat in my hair the last time I saw her!" Alice smiled as though scathing comments were amusing to remember.

"While I'm getting my mind cleared up this afternoon," said Margaret, turning from watching a mild wrestling bout between Frieda and Hannah, "I may as well find out who Mrs. Langdon really is, or, rather, since I've seen her and met her, how you girls happen to know her so well. I've often wondered. She seems to be such an awesome old lady, and so many Faculty, even, don't know her."

"Mother knew her years ago," Catherine answered. "She lived here in her girlhood, and then married a railroad man and lived all over in frontier places and then more or less in Europe, and when he was going to die, they came back here to her father's house, and pretty soon Mr. Langdon died, and she has stayed in town ever since, hardly going away from her own grounds, except to church. It was on a visit home one winter, that she met Mother, who was a student in college."

"And for dear Dr. Helen's sake, she has adopted all of us, including Hilda," said Alice, "and we love her dearly. It's like getting into another world altogether to go into her house and spend an hour with her."

"I know," agreed Catherine. "You go back about fifty years, when she and her girl friends, Evelyn — she's Madam Kittredge now, and our

pastor's mother at Winsted — and Matty used to be together so much. She almost never speaks of her husband or her married life, and yet I am sure she loved him devotedly."

"That's why she does n't speak of it," said Margaret softly. "Well, you surely are fortunate in having another world to go to, now and then. I'm awfully fond of college, but it is a narrow life."

"Fiddlesticks!" Frieda arrived to hear the last words. "That does all very well for a house meeting, but you know you don't believe it, Peggy Warren, not the least bit. *Pfui!* A narrow world indeed! Come on and find that bittersweet."

The bittersweet proved elusive. The favorite place had been visited by others before them and rifled, but as the search was about to be abandoned, Hannah discovered a tree wound with the vine from its lowest branch to its top, and loaded with clusters of orange balls, ready to open and show their red centers.

It meant climbing to gather them, but climbing was nothing to Dexter girls, and no one, seeing Margaret's intense expression as she scrambled up the trunk and hung in precarious positions to reach out after particularly fine bunches of berries, would have suspected her of the blasé sentiment of a few minutes before.

The little maid at Mrs. Langdon's came down the broad walk between tall rows of scarlet sage to meet Alice, bearing the prettiest of the bittersweet.

"She sent me to meet you, she's so pleased to think you're coming," said the little Martha, eagerly. "She's been pretty low in her mind lately, and I know it'll do her good to see you. Thomas and I and Cook are worried about her lately. She don't scold at all, hardly."

A few minutes later Alice returned to say that she was to stay to dinner, and the carriage drove back to college without her, Frieda and Hannah walking, because the bittersweet, they declared, took up so much room, but in reality because neither could fully enjoy a day unless she spent a part of it alone with the other. "Belligerent," Karl had called them long ago, and so they often seemed to their long-suffering companions, but better friends, they were both quite sure, never existed, and of the "four fond hearts which beat as one" these two were perhaps the fondest and the most truly united. Now, walking comfortably along the soft dirt road, saying nothing, but swinging hands like two children, they came suddenly upon a scene which caused them to stop short.

A man and a girl stood talking together. Nothing very startling in that, but the girl was little

Effie Hiscomb, of romantic tendencies, and the man was the driver who had jested with Frieda in the morning.

After a suspended instant, Hannah and Frieda went on till they reached the couple, then stopped again.

"Hello, Effie!" said Hannah. "Coming home now? We can all walk along together."

Effie flushed and twisted uncomfortably, but, as Frieda slipped her arm inside hers, she gave a hurried little nod to her companion and went on with the girls.

"Meet any airships?" called the man after them. "You with the yellow hair?"

Frieda paid no attention to his jeers, and Hannah, her heart thumping with excitement, chattered to Effie about the bittersweet, the Glee Club to which Effie had recently been elected, and any other topics that came into her head.

Effie left them at the door of Main without thanks for their company, and Hannah and Frieda entered their own room in a state of suppressed excitement which only the absorbing nature of her day's accumulated mail prevented Catherine's observing.

After dinner Hannah led Frieda away to a quiet corner to discuss the situation. Even to Frieda, who regarded many of the college regula-

tions lightly, this was a grave matter. For her to speak to the man as she had this morning, chiefly to shock Catherine and Margaret, was one thing — for a college girl to be walking alone with him on a country road was another.

"Of course, he may be her cousin," she remarked. "You Americans are so peculiar."

"Yes, he might be her cousin. His driving horses for a living is n't anything," said Hannah, "but his being the tough kind he is does matter. And I know Effie is a perfect little ninny. What can we do about it?"

"Ask Catherine."

"But Catherine is Self-Government, and would think it her duty to investigate and there might be a lot of trouble. No, I don't want to tell her till we know more about it."

"Let's ask Alice then."

"Well. She'll come over to chapel. Let's wait for her and grab her when she comes out and tell her all about it."

Alice, marching sedately out of chapel, found herself seized and silenced, and drawn away into a shadowy retreat. The children, even in their real anxiety over Effie, could not let slip the opportunity to be theatrical.

Taking the muffler from Alice's eyes, they pushed her down on a bench and told her their

story in excited whispers. Alice was all attention and distress in a moment.

"She's one of the girls who ought to be at home, only I suspect her home isn't a real one. I've tried to get at her some way, but I couldn't find any common ground. She reads the most sickening stuff. I thought the Glee Club election would get her in with nicer girls."

"Hilda said she was taking voice lessons to be able to answer her lovers' serenades. You can just tell by looking at her that she's thinking of such idiotic things!" Hannah's voice was vibrant with scorn.

"I tell you," Frieda commanded attention. "Serenade her and find out if she answers! We'll do it to-night. Alice, you can sing like a man with that deep voice of yours. And Hannah can borrow a catarrh somewhere, and I'll throw pebbles at her window-pane."

"We could find out that way just how big a goose she is," said Alice thoughtfully. "I believe it's worth trying."

"And it will be larks for us," said Hannah joyfully. "I shouldn't mind trying to reform people if it was always such jolly stunts as that you had to do to do it! I'll get Mabel Bacon's mandolin. You don't play it just like a fiddle, but I guess I can play it as well as that livery driver. Let's do it right away."

"My honey, O my honey!" Alice's deepest register and a most sentimental expression, with a faint tum-te-tum accompaniment, altogether a fair imitation of a stage serenade.

Little Effie Hiscomb's window was on the second floor in the same end of the building as No. 47. The shade was discreetly drawn, but Frieda with good aim had pelted the pane with small pebbles till the light went out, and a window creaked slightly as if being stealthily opened. Close to the house, hidden by the shadow, and not to be discovered save by some one actually leaning out of the window, the serenaders crouched, Alice wearing Hannah's riding derby.

"Come to the window, love," she growled, with a squeak on a high note that caused Frieda to bury her face in her sleeve.

"Flee with me into the night alone." In default of appropriate songs in her repertory, which consisted almost entirely of oratorio arias, Alice had been driven to improvisation. Now she hummed a little, trying to think how to finish, while Hannah experimented with the mandolin.

"Flee with me, flee with me, and be my own." Alice brought it out triumphantly, dwelling on the "be" till a gurgle from Frieda warned her to hasten on to the end.

Silence.

"Nothing doing," whispered Hannah. "I'll try a little conversation. Perhaps she does not care for his music. Honey! Say, Dearie, I want to tell you something. I was going to when those fool girls interrupted us. Say —"

Spatter! Spatter! Splash!

Coughing and choking, drenched and dripping, the astounded conspirators slid away, keeping close to the wall, while a strident voice spoke from upper regions:

"You get away and stay away or I'll have you arrested. Clear out, I tell you. Scat!"

"Miss Eastman! How could we have forgotten that her room was just over Effie's?" giggled Hannah, as she and Alice dropped upon the doorstep to wait for Frieda, whose retreat had taken her around the building in the opposite direction. "You don't suppose water hurts a mandolin much, do you?"

"I can't see that we have convicted Effie of being very much of a silly," said Alice, "but if she did have any idea of letting men come around under her window, I think she'll change her mind! O Frieda, darling, you look like a drowned kitten!"

"I feel more like a goose," replied Frieda, "but I've always heard about water running off a goose's back, and it does n't off mine. It runs down it!"

CHAPTER SIX

CHRISTIANS' COZY CORNER

"Do let 's hurry up and finish this translation, Frieda. I'm crazy to get down and see how far along they are with the Cozy Corner. They must have almost everything in now. I wish Mademoiselle Corinne would give us a cut."

"I don't. I like this class best of all. I enjoy conversation."

"I should think you would. You shine so. But you ought to, living right next door to France all your life. What does *vaillantise* mean?"

"*Tapferkeit*. English, valiantry."

Hannah shook her head dissentingly.

"Can't be. It does n't sound right. I don't believe there is such a word. Bravery or courage will do."

Frieda set her lips in a line.

"There should be a word, valiantry. If not, why gallantry?"

"*I* don't know. Ask the dictionary."

"I have no trust in dictionaries. They say that 'simple' and 'foolish' are synonyms. And Catherine was offended when I said she did her

hair idiotically, and every one knows that idiots are foolish."

Hannah heaved a mighty sigh.

"I'll have to take Argumentation next semester, just to learn how to talk back to you. I know you're all wrong, but I don't know how to prove it. Anyhow, I do think you take awful liberties with the English language, and it's a wonder people understand you."

"But they do."

"Yes! And laugh at your queernesses, so you think it's clever to make up words. You'd annihilate me if I took to coining German words."

"German words are reasonable words to start with. That is different! Also, in Germany young maidens do not make laws on their own fist. If laws, why not language? Especially when one is precise as I am. Miss Eliot laughed at me for saying that Karl was very *pa*ture. But I do not think it sounds well to say *ma*ture of a gentleman!"

"O, you're perfectly incorrigible and insufferable. I suppose when you get back to Germany you will set up a school of English as you think it ought to be spoken. Sometimes I feel like having you arrested. I'd write to President Taft to get some authority you must respect, but I suppose you would n't consider *him* important."

"Americans are like children. They count out

for their President. How goes it? Eeny, meeny, miny, mo? And then after four years it is somebody's turn again. There! My darling Hannah! Do not be angry. I do it only to make you make great eyes at me. I love you dearly, and I love good America, but I am a tease. Forgive me. You are so good, and I — I forever tease you."

"All right," said Hannah, squeezing Frieda's offered hand. "Now let's really work, for I do want to go down and see how much they've got done in that room. It looked pretty hopeless when we took the rug down, but Alice is so, as you say, neck over head in earnest, that she's sure to make a go of it."

The room in question was one of Alice's inspirations. As President of the Association for Christian Work, she had studied the needs of the girls, and after much dreaming over the matter, had decided that the greatest obstacle in the way of getting into the close sisterly relations she desired with such girls as the foolish little Effie, the none-too-cultured Mabel Bacon, and the others whom she and Catherine designated playfully as "uncongenial ladies," was the lack of some place where they could meet with perfect ease. The little parlor of 47 was always full. Committee meetings, parties or study-hours forbade its being used in the informal friendly way she meant. The

average shy girl in college would as soon have thought of "dropping in" on President MacArthur as on the merry four and their friends.

Once convinced that a room, open to all the Christian Association girls, as the sorority rooms were to their members, was what she needed, Alice lost no time in confiding her desires to Miss Eliot, who promptly came to her assistance, assigning to the purpose a vacant room in use as a storeroom. This, freshly papered and cleaned by the college, the girls set themselves to furnish, and for a week, every moment that could be spared from actual class engagements Catherine, whose experience in similarly equipping a library in her home town made her an efficient leader, Alice, Margaret and Priscilla, with a large band of volunteer helpers, had labored, gathering in odd articles of furniture, and securing promises of others. Now while Hannah and Frieda were waging a war of words as preparation for Mademoiselle Corinne's special French class, the tired executive committee was resting and applauding its own successes.

"I call this the Christianest kind of Christian work, Alice Prescott," declared Margaret, putting the last touch of paint to the letters A. C. W. on the door. "You've been making this Association over ever since you first worked on a committee.

"Catherine stopped at a little shop, over the door of which a wooden boot hung stiffly." — *Page* 120.

It was nothing but a prayer-meeting once a week, and dues once a semester, before you took hold, but last year you woke us all up with the maids' social club and the regular Bible study classes, and this year, with the way you're connecting our work with the churches down town, and now this inspiration of a room, you bid fair to put the A. C. W. at the head of college interests."

"It might well be, don't you think?" asked Alice from the big rocker in which she was half reclining.

"I suppose so," agreed Priscilla, somewhat doubtfully. "It ought to represent the church, and the church ought to be something to recognize first of all. I don't know why it's so much easier to work up class spirit and athletic enthusiasm and feeling about Self-Government, to say nothing of sorority loyalty, than about church things."

"It is queer," pondered Catherine. "Of course, it's partly because most of us have n't any very acute church consciousness at home. And then we're shy about anything so intimate as religion."

"That's it!" Priscilla thumped a pillow to give force to her statement. "And you ought to feel shy about it. I'd as soon see people making love in the park as parading their sacredest experiences the way they do, sometimes. But when it

comes to work, doing something practical to show the feeling that you can't talk about, I'm there, every time. I could n't speak in a prayer-meeting any more than I could fly, and it irritates me to go to them, even, but I'd rather have this room create a real friendly feeling among all sorts and conditions of girls than have Delta kept up, if it came to a choice, and I don't care who knows it."

"Bravo! I'll say the same for Epsilon," cried Margaret with a cautious flourish of her paint brush. "And I'll also say for Epsilon that we'll all take more comfort in our own room for knowing that every girl in college has a pretty cozy place to go to. We'll make a point of coming in often, so that there won't be any feeling about it as an outside-of-sorority place altogether."

"Sororities don't count for much any more, here," remarked Priscilla. "And it's largely due to you two and Hannah."

"Nonsense," said Catherine briskly. "The subject has been threshed out in all the magazines and papers and Supreme Courts till there's nothing left of it. If the girls who are in were all as little inclined to be snobbish and exclusive as you are, and the girls outside as independent in spirit as they ought to be, it never would have been a burning question anyhow. O, Miss Eliot, how dear of you to come!"

The four sprang to their feet to welcome the kindly-eyed woman who entered. Dexter College and Miss Eliot were practically synonyms in the minds of generations of alumnæ. Nominally only instructor at first and later professor of History, she had for years been right hand to the president, and "guide, philosopher and friend" to the students till this year she had been officially so recognized and, relieved of part of her teaching, had been elected dean, with time to help the girls work out the problems in living that came to them. Her soft gray hair made her look older than she really was, a close contemporary of Catherine's doctor-mother, but the eyes had a spark of inextinguishable youth in them, and the deep respect the girls felt for her was always tempered by a saving sense of her unfailing companionability.

"You seemed to be very busy talking," she remarked as she came into the room. "I don't see how you had breath enough left after all the running about you have done, to say nothing of ladder-climbing."

"Just throwing a few bouquets at each other," explained Priscilla. "What do you think of the tooting assembly?"

"Of the what?"

"O, the plump Pidgin tried to air a little French the other day and that was her rendering of *tout*

ensemble, that's all. She asked me to 'pass the butter, silver plate,' and it confused me awfully at first. But it's no worse than her English — Pidgin English I call it."

"Pris dear!" Alice looked reproachfully at her. "It's not a week since you swore off making fun of people just to be funny. And you know Miss Pidgin was lovely about the room. See, Miss Eliot, here's what she gave," and Alice showed a really handsome table lamp. "It was the finest thing she had in her room. People have been so grand about it. Do sit down and let us exhibit everything. Sit in the nice Morris chair Miss Eastman sent in."

"She would n't be comfortable in anything but a straight-backed kitchen chair with a hard bottom," insisted Priscilla, " and the college furnishes easy-chairs for P. G.'s and lazy Faculty.''

"We need some inducements to stay with such a student body," Miss Eliot replied with a smile for Priscilla, whom every one liked in spite of her rather caustic comments on her neighbors. "This is the rug Hannah and Frieda did not need when they moved in with you girls, I suppose, and a very pretty one, too. It seems to me that couch cover reminds me of Hannah."

"What a memory!" gasped Alice. "Yes, she had it in her little room two years ago, and we

did n't need it this year,— our room being old blue and this too light a color. Frieda contributed Schiller and Goethe," indicating two busts on the top of the bookcase. "And the bookcase itself is brand new and lent by that stingy Miss Barnes, who never buys anything for herself but borrows from everybody. I did n't expect her to give a thing, but you never can tell."

" '*Ach, du lieber Bernard Shaw!*' " hummed Priscilla. "I saw the cleverest twins in *You Never Can Tell* in Chicago last week. Go on, Alice. B is for Barnes, the Beneficent. Did the Barrows widow put in her mite?"

"Yes," exclaimed Catherine. "I asked her. I did n't see how she could give anything, for her room is as bare as the day college opened, but she has such a longing look all the time I could n't leave her out. And she said she bought a magazine every month and she would give that to us. I don't see why she wanted to come to college, do you, Miss Eliot? It must be the dreariest thing to come to live among a lot of girls after you're fifty and your husband is dead!"

"Still, it was what she did want to do, and I hope she is finding it not too dreary. The girls are very kind to her, but the work is her chief trouble. It is so much heavier than she expected. She has dropped all but two studies now and toils

over them in a pitiful fashion. Frieda helps her with her German, evenings, though, and she hopes to make her grade in that."

"That young roommate of ours puts us to shame constantly," said Catherine. "I am always hearing of some Good Samaritan act of hers, and yet I would be willing to take my oath that she is always around the room, quarrelling with Hannah or tormenting me by singing in study-hours or hiding *The Egoist* so Alice can't find it."

"Girls, look here!" Alice had pounced upon a copy of the book in question standing sedately upon a shelf between a small dictionary and a Bible. "This is my very own copy, which I have n't been able to find for days, and look at this inscription: *Presented to the A. C. W. of Dexter College, by Frieda Lange. Fifty cents fine for removal from this shelf.* When do you suppose the monkey had a chance to get it in here without our seeing her? She has never forgiven me for trying to get her to read that book. The chapter on the leg was too much for her altogether, and she has seemed to think it a sign of a cracked brain on my part to like it."

"Funny Frieda! I can't imagine a more absurd idea than her reading Meredith. That desk looks well, now that you have dusted it! A little furniture polish would make it quite elegant. Think

of a girl forgetting to claim such a good piece of mahogany as that! It has been in the storeroom for three years."

"I counted fifteen white petticoats in the unmarked laundry room yesterday," said Margaret, "and the one I did n't get back from the wash was n't among them."

"My clothes come back on the instalment plan nowadays," declared Catherine. "The ruffle to a sleeve one week, the sleeve the next and the nightgown itself the third week."

"And mine are embalmed in fish-oil," said Priscilla solemnly, "or else varnish. I can't quite make out which!"

"I know. They do the towels in it. I don't wipe my face any more,— just let it dry *au naturel*, because I do not like the smell!" sang Catherine. "O come in, Clarinda. Is n't this comfortable? Are you bringing something more?"

"Yes, these De Morgan books. My brother gave them to me for Christmas, and I simply can't wade through them, but I know they are supposed to be good, so I thought I'd put them down here where any one who wanted to could use them."

Catherine with a low cry of joy seized upon the dark blue volumes. "I have n't even seen the last one."

Alice put a preventing hand over her eyes. "Don't you dare open it to-day. I know you. I lived with you while you read *Joseph Vance!* And this room has got to be all finished before you so much as turn to the title-page. That was delightful of you, Clarinda. Does n't Mabel's big vase show up well? And Miss Eliot says the flower committee may have fresh flowers from the greenhouse every day."

"That's lovely," said Clarinda, dropping into a chair with a freedom from shyness which pleased Alice, as a sign that her hope was beginning to be realized. "It does look so nice and cozy, even without any curtains or banners or things. We could get lots of banners as easy as not."

"Do you think it would be wise?" asked Miss Eliot, while the committee held its breath with alarm at the idea. "We could n't possibly put up everybody's school flags or those of the colleges they are interested in, so it seems to me it might be better to leave them out altogether. My mother always preached to me about having 'the courage of bare walls,' and we could cultivate it a little, here. I wonder," Miss Eliot stopped and thought a minute, "if you would like me to bring down that little water color that hangs over my desk, and hang it here? Almost every girl in school has admired that and wanted to

own it at some time or other, so it might be a good idea to have it where every one can see it."

"That adorable picture with the green woods path?" asked Priscilla, while Clarinda joined in:

"That perfectly stunning gold frame?" and Margaret said gently:

"If this room is used as freely by the girls as yours is, Miss Eliot, it will be more than we have dared to hope, but I'm sure it could n't fail of its purpose if it held that beautiful picture that we've all loved. Are you sure you won't miss it?"

"O, I shall be coming in here often, too. Did n't you expect me? Mrs. MacArthur told me to tell you she would lend you a panel of framed photographs of Burne-Jones paintings if you cared for it, and with Hannah's little group of Grasmere pictures there, nothing more will be needed. There 's not much wall space. How are you going to manage about keeping the room in order, girls?"

"I thought we'd just do it alphabetically. Two girls a day, you know."

"That would bring me with the Sanders girl or Miss Summerson," said Catherine thoughtfully. "I don't know either of them."

"More shame to you, then!" said Alice briskly. "For serving tea — if we ever get a tea-table — we could arrange it by classes, and that would

make it possible to get more congenial pairs. I do think it's queer how seldom it is that congeniality and alphabetical order go together. I never had a friend named P, except Priscilla, and I never come next her in anything. And Miss Pidgin is so fat I can't see around her to see if Pris is there in chapel."

"Nice talk for the President of the A. C. W.," mocked Catherine. "Don't you think so, Clarinda Rogers? After she scolded me! O glory, glory! There's Mademoiselle Corinne with all her conversation class! Come in, come in, and please admire. What is she bringing? O Mademoiselle Corinne Beloved! Your own dear tea-table and service? That's right, Effie, put the cunning tray down here. And Sibyl has brought a work-basket all fitted out? O, every one is so lovely!"

"It was all we talked about in conversation class," said Effie. "And Mademoiselle Corinne said that she would enjoy more having her tea here now and then, with any of us who happened in, than alone in her own room."

A dozen girls crowded in, each depositing something, a sofa pillow, book, book rack or a candlestick, all eagerly looking about and examining.

"Hilda Maynard and Helen Gray have gone down town to get things for the desk. They

promised to stock it, and Hilda was to get the things, but she forgot what she went down town for the first time, so Helen has gone with her," declared Mabel Bacon.

"And Fräulein Meyer says we can have that large stuffed cat of hers, to make it seem homelike," laughed one of the shy girls whom Catherine had vainly tried to "cultivate" in the fall.

Miss Pidgin's stout person filled up the doorway, and the little prep twins, Betsey and Molly Fleming, who were always up to some sort of mischief together and usually avoided Alice and Margaret as though they had been Faculty, peered around her at the two lateral indentations which indicated her waist-line.

"I'm going to write all my Sunday letters here," sang some one. "And I'm going to see to the flowers!" "And I'll do the dusting!" "And I'm going to embroider some tea napkins with C. C. C. on them!" announced the stingy Miss Barnes, quite carried away by the generous tide.

Suddenly, over Miss Pidgin's head loomed up Genevieve Maloney's.

"Miss El-yot," she called, in the loud voice which no training could subdue, "Miss Watkins said I was to tell you and the girls there'd be fudge cake and chocolate served here this evenin' after chapel for everybody to celebrate the openin'.

Gee!" for the twins had propelled the plump Pidgin inside the room, thus allowing Genevieve an unobstructed view, "it sure is a beaut. There ain't no two ways about it. That little Prescott girl 's a hustler!"

CHAPTER SEVEN

CHRISTMAS

HANNAH and Frieda climbed the stairs wearily, stiff from riding, and clumsy in their unwonted skirts. Of all the seventy-five girls at Dexter these two alone indulged in riding. "The rest lack ability, time or inclination, habit, horse, or parental permission," Hannah was given to explaining, an explanation which Frieda once attempted with the same airiness, but which, owing to a persistent confusion in her mind between the words "permission" and "allowance," missed something of the desired effect. Because they were the only riders, their gregarious nature caused them to spend most of their free time in sports in which their friends could join, riding scarcely often enough to overcome the lameness consequent upon wide intervals between attempts. These unusually mild days in early December had tempted them greatly in spite of a sad prevision of the painful morrow when each step should be misery and each downsitting and uprising fraught with woe. Now, as they dragged themselves into the room and dropped upon the couch with

groans, Catherine waved an open letter before their eyes.

"Hear ye! Mother writes that she has a good maid engaged at last and she wants me to bring all three of you home for the holidays if you will come!"

"Ripping!" cried Frieda promptly; "I was going home with Hannah, but this will be much cheaper and I can buy a piano bench for Epsilon."

Hannah sat staring at Catherine while Frieda spoke, and then said in tones of incredulity:

"Spend *Christmas* away from home? Me? Not even see Dad and Mamma on the 25th of December? When I've had that row of chocolate babies on my bureau for two months and eaten one a day to check off the time? Why, Catherine Gardiner Smith, there are only one hundred and fifty-nine hours and a half left, if the trains are on time. What can you be thinking of?"

Catherine looked somewhat crestfallen. Her extremely frank young roommates were very dear to her, and she delighted often in their constitutional inability to disguise their sentiments, but she had at this moment a quick sense of the real value of social lubricants. Alice, coming in, looked from one face to another.

"What 's wrong?" she asked anxiously.

Catherine flushed and answered, trying to smile:

"Nothing. I just asked you all to spend Christmas with me, and Frieda accepts because the railroad fare is low and she can get a piano bench for Epsilon, and Hannah is insulted at the idea of my expecting her to go anywhere but home. I don't know how to expect you to take it!"

There was a quaver in Catherine's voice, and Hannah and Frieda, full of compunction, turned anxious eyes to Alice for leadership in the embarrassing situation.

Alice dropped into Catherine's lap and kissed her eyes, which were half closed to hide the sudden tears.

"Cathy dear, you are a perfect darling to want us. When you had Pris and Margaret up for Thanksgiving, and have n't had any time at all alone with your beloved parents, I think you were awfully generous to ask us. Of course, Hannah would be needed at home, but Frieda and I would like nothing better, and we'll go most gladly. You infants!" Alice turned to the tongue-tied two and scolded at them: "Are n't you ever going to learn to express yourselves the comfortable way instead of the other? Catherine is n't a sensitive soul, and she takes all sorts of things from you, but a person with a hide like a rhinoceros would wince at such responses to an invitation!"

Alice's ferocity and the meek state of the guilty pair were too much for Catherine's self-control, and the averted tears turned into hysterical laughter.

"You *are* so funny, all three of you!" she gasped. "If you'll forgive me for inviting you, Hannah, I'll forgive you for declining and we'll try to worry along without you for two weeks or so. And Frieda will have to have her piano bench inscribed: *Earned by going to Three Gables for Christmas*. There's no telling what Alice's real views are. She would n't have dared decline under the circumstances."

The atmosphere was cleared by this time, and Hannah and Frieda asked pardon in mute ways which Catherine quite understood, while Alice turned her attention to the mail unopened on her desk. Suddenly she exploded into a queer little chuckle.

"Girls! Listen to this. Mrs. Langdon wishes me to spend the vacation at Elmknoll."

There was a moment's silence and then a shout of laughter. Every one recognized that Mrs. Langdon particularly claimed Alice, and, though the financial relation between the two was supposed to be a secret and was never referred to, Alice's three roommates had long since surmised it, so, now, adding that obligation to the

great kindnesses constantly shown to the young girl by the lonely old lady, all saw at once that this invitation had the compelling character of a summons to dinner at the White House.

"My poor little house-party!" sighed Catherine, quite restored to good spirits by this time. "I shall have to go out into the byways and hedges, or put up with Frieda all alone. You must n't fail me, Frieda. Father and Hotspur have their hearts set on you."

"Fail you! I do not love Tante Edith and Uncle Edward Eldred more than I do your father and mother doctors. That's the solemn truth. And I don't love you less than Hannah. And Hannah has no dog!"

"So we 'd win, even if the railroad fare were out of the question? Good for you, Frieda, and we'll give Hotspur a wreath and an extra fine bone to show him we appreciate his tipping the scales in our favor. I'll write Mother at once."

One hundred and fifty-nine hours and fifteen minutes after this conversation, Hannah had boarded the first train eastward, joyful in the prospect of meeting in Chicago her father, who had opportunely been called by business to that city. Alice, cheerful if a little wistful, had committed herself and a canvas trunk to Mrs.

Langdon's carriage and the care of the trusty Thomas. Catherine was directing a baggageman who had called for her trunk and Frieda's. Suddenly heavy running steps sounded on the stairs and in the corridor and Frieda seized the man by the arm.

"Not that one. Not going."

She shook her head fiercely in answer to Catherine's exclamations of amazement, dragged the trunk into the room, herself, and sat down on it with emphasis.

"But, Frieda child, it's nearly train time."

"Late a'ready, Miss. Can't wait any longer."

"Frieda, get up this minute. What is the matter?"

Frieda, putting her hand upon her thumping heart, gasped out:

"Hilda — bombazine — gasoline — columbine — what you call it? Coughs — whoops — Doctor says she has *quarantine!*" The word came out with triumph.

"Really? Poor darling. But you must come on, Frieda. There is n't any time to go and see her. We 'll send her flowers and letters and all sorts of things, but there is n't a minute —"

"I 'm not going, I tell you. I shall stay with Hilda, of course. The whole *Ferien* alone with Miss Watkins and the beastly doctor? Never!

It breaks my heart, Catherine, but I cannot leave Hilda."

"But the doctor won't let you stay with her."

"She must. If needful I can whoop, much louder than Hilda. Go now. Hurry. Greet Hotspur from me. Hurry! Hasten! Speedy! Quick! *Um Himmels willen beeile dich!* Before I cry, go! *Bitte!*"

Catherine, about dusk, rousing herself from a vivid picture of Hilda's tearful joy at Frieda's sacrifice, the two clinging to each other in the bare white hospital room in the isolated ell, stepped from the train to the Winsted platform and looked inquiringly all about her.

"Not a soul to meet me? This vacation surely has been hoodooed from the start. Did you see my father or mother anywhere on the way, Mr. Hosmer?"

The bus driver shook his head.

"Better get in here, Cath*erine*. I'll take you up. There 's quite a considerable sickness in town and I guess your folks are pretty much rushed. I see Dr. Harlow last night and he said you was a-coming. Understood him to say the little Dutch girl was comin' with you."

"She could n't, at the last minute." Catherine looked wistfully up the snowy hill. "I suppose

I may as well let you take me up, Mr. Hosmer. My suit-case is too heavy to carry."

Mr. Hosmer flung the bus door open grandly.

"Pile right in. It shan't cost you a cent. I'll set your satchel up in front."

"No, you don't, Hosmer." A boy's voice rang out over the mad jingling of sleighbells and a cutter slid up beside the platform, two fine horses coming to a short stop as their driver sprang out.

"The fool beasts shied at a snow man around the corner and I had the dickens of a time to get them under control. How are you, Catherine? Your mother sent me. Give Hosmer your check. He can have your trunk to take up, but he shan't cut me out in the main issue!" And Bert restored his lifted cap to his brown head, and tucked the fur robes about Catherine as she seated herself.

"Is n't it cold?" she shivered, clasping her gloved hands under the robe as Bert took his place and the horses dashed off up the hill street. "After that overheated car! I'm glad as can be to see you, Bert. How is everybody?"

"All right at your house, but frightfully busy. Operations every twenty minutes all over town, a perfect epidemic of them. I don't see how they ever got on without me."

"Modest creature! Do you like it?"

"Rather, — and I'll get my college course just

by living with your father. Dorcas asked me," Bert chuckled at the memory, and Catherine, appreciating the possibilities of an encounter between those two, laughed with him in anticipation, "what degree I expected to take, and I told her I was already R. H. M. of the B. P. O. E., — right-hand man of the best physician on earth, of course, and she harangued me for ten minutes on the foolishness of a young man penurious joining the Elks!"

"You have n't changed, and neither has she. Is Polly home yet?"

"Coming to-night on the nine-fifteen. Arch meant to come out on that train, too,— could have travelled a thousand miles or so with Polly, but he struck a train a few hours faster and got in this noon, when nobody expected him. Saw him wallowing through the drifts to Bess' just now."

"And Max is home, I suppose, and Bess and Win and Bertha and Agnes are always here — and Dot. Is she really teaching a country school?"

"Sure thing. Making a success, too. Your father and I drop in at her school house to get warm when we're out that way, and you should see the way the kids like her. She'll be glad to see you."

"O, it's so good to get back. And everything 's

just the same. There's Judge Arthur's little darky hitching post even!"

"A few landmarks still tottering on their foundations," mocked Bert. "In the three weeks since Thanksgiving not all the familiar features of Winsted have changed. Those were nice girls you brought out then, Catherine,— that Miss Perkins is ripping. O, I say, I thought Frieda was coming this time. Where is she?" And Bert drew up his horses and looked around as though he expected to see Frieda in a drift behind.

"She was, but she could n't, on account of bombazine-gasoline-columbine-quarantine and her own incurable goodness of heart. O Mother!"

Before the horses had quite stopped, Catherine had thrown the tangling robes aside and jumped out into the arms of her mother, who had come down the long walk to meet her.

"Dr. Harlow telephoned that he would be ready to leave the hospital by the time you could get there, Bert. Make haste, and come in yourself when you bring him. *Now*, darling!"

The great fire in the living-room crackled a welcome. Hotspur, the setter, wagged his tail and leaped with welcome. Millie, the new maid, showed big teeth in a smile of welcome from the kitchen door. The telephone bell rang briskly, Dr. Harlow calling up to welcome his girl while

he waited for Bert to take him to her. Upstairs in Catherine's room a second fire tried to outdo the living-room's welcome. A great vase of chrysanthemums on the big table and a bowl of violets on the dresser did their share in the welcoming.

Catherine's eyes shone softly as she took off her gloves and hat, hung her coat on its particular hanger in her own great closet, picked a fallen ember from the hearth, and turned at last to look straight into the clear eyes of her mother, who hovered about the room, too restless to sit down just yet.

"Mother, prison would be worth while, to say nothing of college, and Dexter College at that, for the sake of coming home. Where did you ever get such citified flowers?"

"I sent for them to Milwaukee, when I was ordering the holly. No home-coming seems complete without flowers."

Catherine put her arms around the great circumference of the chrysanthemums, and then selected one to wear.

"You'll have to pin it on me, Mother. O, what a dream of a rose!" She bent to touch and kiss a round little rose of the faintest, coolest pink, gracing a slim silver vase on her low sewing-table.

"It is one of Madam Kittredge's precious Mount

Vernon roses, from a slip from the Washington garden. She has been coaxing it and petting it, to get it to bloom for you at Christmas, and yesterday it opened. She sent it, saying that, like herself, it was too impatient for you, to wait properly."

"I'll go over after supper and see her. Mrs. Langdon sent such loving messages to her, not so much in words, but in her voice and the look of her eyes. It's beautiful to know that schoolgirl friendships can last as theirs have, with each other and Miss Matty. O, there comes Father at last!" and she ran down the stairs to meet and almost carry off his feet the slender little man with the wise merry eyes, who frankly showed the pride he felt in his tall and entirely satisfactory daughter.

Christmas morning the tap of a crutch in the corridor outside Alice's door at Elmknoll roused the sleeping girl from homesick dreams of Jackaboy and Cora and the other little Prescotts dancing about the Christmas tree. Waiting only long enough to put on the pretty pink kimono which she had found the evening before in her box from home, Alice admitted her unusual visitor.

"This is the time children like best to receive their Christmas gifts, I believe," said Mrs. Lang-

don, "so I am bringing you yours. It is cold here. Is n't the fire laid?"

"Yes, indeed. I'll light it. Martha never forgets. There!" As the kindling caught, Alice drew an arm-chair near the hearth. "Won't you please sit down and undo your parcels? I have one for you from each of the girls."

Mrs. Langdon willingly seated herself, and, in her own pleasure in unfolding the soft lilac shoulder shawl which had been Alice's occupation in leisure minutes all the fall, almost forgot to watch the girl beside her opening with unfeigned delight the box which contained a beautiful shopping bag with a silver monogram, *A. B. P.*, on its side.

"Open it. See if the fittings please you."

Alice obeyed, exclaiming with delight as she found in the purse one of the rare St. Gaudens gold pieces, in the card-case cards whereon she read her own name in Old English engraving, and in one of the side pockets a tiny, old-fashioned vinaigrette of crystal, and a delicate handkerchief with her initials embroidered in the corner.

"It's too much. It's a fairy-story Christmas gift," she cried.

"You've missed one."

"I don't understand it," said Alice, gazing in bewilderment at the folded paper which she found in the last pocket.

"It's a bond. Not a large amount represented, but I do not like the idea of your going to teaching with no invested money at all to relieve you from the strain of feeling wholly dependent on your own earnings. You are not to use this, not even the interest, if you can manage without it. I have been pleased by your care and your good business habits, Alice, since I have been watching you, and I want them to develop. My own property would have been much less if I had not known something of business methods."

"But I don't quite understand. I know how to write checks properly, and how to keep accounts, and of course we have always had to save, and learn to buy essential things and let others go, but even if I ever should have any money, I should n't know anything about investments. Do you think I ought?"

"No!" Mrs. Langdon's voice took on an oratorical fervor as she mounted one of her favorite hobbies. "Half the widows and school teachers who try to do their own investing lose everything. A woman can ordinarily know nothing about investments, but she can know about men. Train yourself to judge human nature. Know a cheat from a straight man, and then trust the honest man. Find a banker whose business it is to know money and make him look out for your

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interests for you. You can't judge gold mines or railroad securities, but you can judge men. If you can't, you ought to be ashamed of yourself. Use your trained mind we hear so much about these days. Don't take any one else's estimates. Make your own carefully, and test them thoroughly. The proper study of mankind is man. In Matty Hayward's last letter she tells me that she has been hampered in her Christmas plans because of financial difficulty! It's a wonder she has enough to live on. When her father died he left her the house and grounds and a little bank stock, stock as good as the government, and I don't know but better. Matty sold the stock, because she said a gentleman wanted to buy it, and he seemed so anxious for it she thought she ought to let him have it! She's the kindest soul on God's earth, and the best, but she has no more discrimination than a codfish. Thinks me a marvel of goodness, for example! I'm worried about Matty, Alice. She has n't alluded to financial matters in her letters before in all these years, though she has written to me monthly. She does n't consider it delicate to write of money! I dragged it out of her about that bank stock when I went to see her after her father's death. I gave her a piece of my mind then, but I have n't seen her since. This lameness keeps me a pris-

oner, or I should go up to Milwaukee and find out about her."

"Does Madam Kittredge know?"

"No more than I do, and not so much, for her blindness makes it necessary for some one to read her letters aloud to her, and Matty would confide in her even less than in me. For years she has sent each of us for Christmas the most delicate embroidered linen, personal and for the table. And this year the work is as exquisite as ever, but it is done on inferior materials, and I am afraid it is because she cannot afford better."

Mrs. Langdon's face was so anxious and distressed that Alice, listening, felt herself quite incapable of offering comfort. The silence seemed to arouse the old lady presently, and she stood up and took her crutch, saying:

"I told that foolish young woman doctor over at the college that I should send over for Hilda and Frieda to-day, to stay here the rest of the vacation. The girl has n't coughed since the third day, and it 's absurd to coop her up!" Mrs. Langdon opened the door — an ironical smile breaking over her face. "Alice, my child, it is a huge responsibility to have more sense than other people! Wisdom will die with me — but meanwhile it is wearing me out!"

CHAPTER EIGHT

MAIL

"HOME,
"Thursday.

"*Dear Allie et Alii:*

"Is n't that a clever beginning? Letta Marston's father was a lawyer, so we used to have little bar docket books to play with, and that's where I learned my first Latin. Got the rest from Miss Eastman. (It makes my blood run cold to write her name!)

"I was so glad to hear that Mrs. Langdon had taken the two dears out of the Infirmary. It was exactly like her. I'm going to do just such things when I'm an old lady.

"Lilian Burton is engaged to lead our choir this next year. She was here for the Christmas music, and I tried my level best to make a match between Karl and her. I *can't* have him go back to Germany, and the only thing that I can think of that would keep him would be a wife. He has called on Polly Osgood out at Wellesley several times, been out to Vespers and had her in for football games, but he does not seem the least

crazy about her, and he is n't enthusiastic over Lilian, either, though he admits she 's nice. I wore myself all out winding the altar rail with southern smilax and making holly wreaths and arranging to have him there to help just when she was there to rehearse. It ought to have done the business, but neither of them seems to be interested. I guess I 'll have to give up and let Karl go, and fix my affections on Sandykirk, my darlingest Christmas present.

"He certainly is the grandest dog that ever lived, and smart as anything. And his dark coat — full dress, white front, and drooping ears are *so* aristocratic! I wish I could bring him back to college, but I can't. Anyhow I've got a clothes allowance. Won't that be fun? I'm going to have no end of lovely gowns, and a hat with plumes, and silk stockings! Mamma and Dad laugh when I talk about it, and Dad says there will be two great safeguards for me, the limit of the allowance and my inherited common sense. I wish you could choose what you 'd inherit!

"Aunt Clara and Mademoiselle Corinne are going to have a winter fête of some kind over at Brookmeadow and we're all going. That reminds me, I have n't written to Hortense yet, and she sent me the loveliest little jabot for Christmas. I suppose she did to all of you.

"I'm trying to have as much fun with Karl now as Frieda will have on the voyage home in June, if we can't manage any way to keep him. Was n't it funny about both of us giving him fobs? It served him right for giving us our coral rings exactly alike, you know, when we left Berlin.

"Mamma has come in, and I can't write now because I want to talk to her every minute.

"Give my love to Mrs. Langdon, and write me just what everybody gave you, the way I did to you the day after Christmas. Mamma says such letters are like Montgomery Ward catalogs, but they're the kind I like to get. I'm crazy to see you. In seven days!

"Lots of love.

"HANNAH."

"THREE GABLES, WINSTED,
"New Year's eve.

"Dear Girls I left behind Me:

"I won't put down the year, because in twenty minutes it will be changed. It's already next year for Hannah!

"It's high time I was in bed, but I am not sleepy after the fine walk in the cold air, and the finer sport before, and I want to tell you about the Boat Club's most successful party.

"Yesterday morning I heard a horn blowing on the lawn and, looking out, saw Peter Osgood on skis. He blew a grand blast and then shouted like a herald an invitation to be at the Boat House this evening at eight.

"Then he was off again over the snow, and I flew to the telephone to ask everybody questions which nobody could or would answer. Max called for me. He has a college friend here who seems very much smitten with Win, and that leaves Max looking about for some one to escort. Mother made us take rugs, just on general principles, but we were glad of them when we got there. The river edge was all illuminated with bonfires, and half the town was out to see, keeping in the background. Bertha and Archie had conceived the plan and, with full moon and wind to help them, succeeded beautifully. It was ice-boating.

"I had never done it before, and I'd like to go every night of my life. If flying is half so grand as that long sliding over the river in great sweeps! Poetry of the first order I call it. Margaret would n't like it, because she is always expecting to break her bones in any sport, and I suppose there is real danger about this, but Archie has had experience, and he and a man Bertha knew about, who does it very often, took charge

and cared for us all. No one was hurt, and I shall never forget the beauty of it, the moon showing at times, and again hidden by the rushing wind clouds, the long shadows from the bonfires on the ice, and the great solemn cracking sounds of the ice itself. If it had been too windy they had planned to turn it into a fagot party, which would have been tame enough. We are going to try our new skis to-morrow on the hill, Polly and I.

"I don't see how I lived in the years when I could n't do out-of-door things, but, after all, it was in those years I found my dear book-world, and without that I might never have known any of you.

"Speaking of books reminds me of the story-hour I'm to give the children to-morrow afternoon. I've been reading some pretty legends about saints and beasts and shall tell them some of those. They will like the story of Saint Kenneth, the little baby who was cared for by the gulls; and then I shall try one of the Irish tales of Cuchulain. I'm going to read it right out of Lady Gregory's book, for no words of mine could be so charming. This is the second tell,— the first one was just before Christmas when I told the Christmas story itself, and had Elsmere recite a little verse I found somewhere about the wise men bringing gifts to the little Christ child. I

wish you had heard his soft little angel voice saying the lines:

"'Not balls or bells or pretty toys,
But gold and strange sweet-smelling things.
How could they know what babies like,
Those old, gray-bearded Kings?'

"His scorn of the Kings was delicious. He still remains a character, and wher I think of coming home to stay I find myself looking forward to Elsmere as much as to any other source of pleasure.

"Good night, my dears. If Alice goes to Milwaukee on the mysterious errand for Mrs. Langdon which she hinted at in her letter, this may not find her. If it does, part of my love is for her. Otherwise, you two may divide her share in her absence!

"The happiest of New Years, dear little almost-sisters!

"With warm love, though the fire has died entirely,

"Your CATHERINE."

"Y. W. C. A. ROOMS, MILWAUKEE,
January Second.

"*My dear Mrs. Langdon:*

"I am comfortably situated here, and expect to have a chance to talk with the Secretary to-

morrow about Association work. Now, of course, I wish to report to you exactly about Miss Matty.

"In the first place, she is not in poor health, as we feared I might find her, but your suspicions as to her financial condition are fully justified. She seems to have nothing at all but the house and your gifts and Madam Kittredge's.

"I arrived about noon, and soon after luncheon set out to find her. I had tried to telephone her, thinking it might be kinder to give her that much warning, but she has no telephone.

"You had told me the house was the old rectory, and I had its picture and that of the little vine-covered church in mind and had a vivid idea of just what I was to find, so when the street-car conductor put me off in a really slummy neighborhood, I thought he must have made a mistake. Because Miss Matty is your friend I fancied I must find her living, however economically, in a serene, dignified place like Elmknoll. But the little old house is quite overshadowed by tall tenements on both sides, and the ivy-covered church is gone altogether and a saloon occupies the site of it. The rectory stands back from the street, you remember, and in the yard were half a dozen children playing. A fat German woman came to the door when I knocked, and looked at me curiously when I asked for Miss Hayward. She

told me Miss Hayward was n't in, but if it was lilies I wanted to buy, she 'd transact the business. When I said I wanted to see Miss Matty herself, she told me to go along up and wait in the room at the back. So I did.

"The room is charming, large and fairly light, and full of hyacinths and Chinese lilies in blossom.

"It is the only room she keeps for herself, using a large closet off from it for her little kitchen. I hate to tell you these things, dear Mrs. Langdon, but I know you want the exact facts. Knowing that, I let myself look around pretty thoroughly while I waited. The German woman seemed fond of Miss Matty, I must tell you at once, and all the poor people about look upon her as a kind of sweet saint and Lady Bountiful. I am sure if she had a large income it would all go in kind service to them. And she seems happy. In her own room she is surrounded with beautiful things, given her by you and Madam Kittredge. I judge she has sold most of her furniture and kept only a few old pieces, but she has never sold any of your gifts, and in all these years your lavishness has given her almost every lovely thing a woman could desire.

"I meant to describe the room in an orderly fashion, but I could n't wait to assure you that she is not suffering for lack of kindness and love.

Just considered as a room, it was the most surprising combination of shabbiness and luxury that could be imagined. The carpet was so worn that the pattern stared at me from the warp, but there were two handsome Oriental rugs, which I could appreciate somewhat from what you have told me about yours. The wall paper was stained and patched, but the pictures would certainly buy Miss Matty a cozy little cottage and furnish it, too. She says that since 'Evelyn' has lost her eyesight she has taken particular pleasure in sending Miss Matty things that are lovely to look at. She has no desk, but on the table is a fine brass desk set, and on a deal shelf are wonderful books, hand bound and with special illustrations. There was an open cupboard in the closet, and there I saw that lovely little breakfast set for one, which you two had designed especially for her last Christmas. And when she came in, she insisted on my having a cup of tea and she used a Sèvres tea set; but she had to send the little German boy out for the tea and sugar, and her little purse was so shabby it hurt my heart to see it.

"I can't tell this story in any proper way or even make a business-like report to you. I'm all moved, to the very heart of me, by that sweet dear little lady and her strange, incongruous surroundings, and you'll have to forgive me.

"I never shall forget her as she looked when she came in. A tiny little lady, in a plain black dress, a quaint old Paisley shawl and the oddest little bonnet, tied under her chin. And such sweetness, and beautiful manners!

"She received me as though she were one princess and I another and I was the one who felt embarrassed about her living in just one room. She made no apologies, and I am sure she thought none. She was full of delight and flutter over seeing some one who had come from you. She asked me eager questions about you before she took off her wraps. She wore a little bow of rose point at the throat, fastened with a fine cameo brooch, and on one hand she had a great sapphire. But her shoes — it does n't seem honorable to tell even you how patched and worn they were!

"Her deafness is not nearly so great as I had expected it to be. I think she has exaggerated it to make 'Evelyn' mind less being blind. It would be like her.

"She made the tea with such a pretty little excitement, and then I succeeded in getting her to talk about old times, and the school days when you three were together. She made it all very real and sweet. I could just see her, a shy little day pupil, whose parents had made some sacrifices to send her, and her bewilderment and delight

when you two ('the gayest and the loveliest girls in school,' she says you were, and I can well believe it) took her up and made her your friend. And I can think too how you and the lovely 'Evelyn' liked to leave the school and come out to the country, as it was then, virtually, to stay over Sunday in Miss Matty's quiet home.

"She showed me her picture as bridesmaid at both weddings, and yours as brides. What a gown yours was! I believe those two journeys are the only ones she has ever taken. Of course, I can see how the regular correspondence was kept up. It would have been impossible for Miss Matty, being Miss Matty, to miss a month, and equally impossible for you or Madam Kittredge to fail her, no matter where you were or what you were doing. It makes me glad to know that friendship can live so faithfully, through change and years of absence.

"The thing that puzzled me for a time was how she had contrived to keep you so long from suspecting her poverty. Then it flashed over me that she had succeeded, simply by not trying! I don't think she realizes that she is poor. The little church died, and she grieved, but she was kept at home, caring for her mother through a long illness, and she scarcely noticed the changes around her. After her mother's death, she simply

devoted herself to the poor. Instead of her going to them, they had come to her. No doubt she was swindled every time she sold a strip of her lawn for building purposes, and now she probably does not always collect the rent, because she would hate to ask it from people as poor as her tenants always are.

"The flower-selling can bring in very little. I'm sure she gives most of her lilies away. She says that in summer she manages to have quite a garden in front of and behind the house, and that the children all around love it and help her do the hard work, and, instead of hindering, protect the flowers from any marauders. It is a decent neighborhood enough, only very poor.

"I asked her to go for a little drive with me, and she was pleased and went out, herself, to telephone for the carriage.

"While she was gone, I picked up a little book of verses that lay on her table. Some of them Miss Matty had marked in the margin, and, reading them, I realized how the burden of the suffering about her is hard for her to bear, and how sweet her trust is. This is one:

" 'Behold, this is my crown.
Love will not let me be.
Love holds me here, Love cuts me down,
And it is well with me.'

and this:

" 'If hungry, Lord, I need but bread,
If I be faint, a cooling cup;
Naught, if I weary, but a bed,
If halt, a staff to hold me up.
If needy, fields to till.
Yet, Lord, I wait Thy will.'

"That underscored line touched my heart. Poor dear! I am sure she thought of the 'fields to till' as more work for her to do, not as furnishing grain for her own uses. I should like to see her riotously selfish for a while, with all sorts of comforts and a garden. No life could be complete for her without a garden. Did you ever see that little book of poems? If you did, you must have read *Fra Gregory's Word to the Lord.* It is too long to quote entire, and I did n't have time to learn it all, either, but it is the story of the gardener monk who works all day over his healing herbs, going out only to minister to the sick. His hope for Heaven is that there he may have

" 'some garden space
Where I may dig in mine old way,
And looking up, Lord, see thy face.'

"I hope you don't think me foolish to take up so much of my letter, quoting poetry, but it was the marked passages which gave me my most

vivid impression, and the English department is always telling us that the way to convey an impression is to follow the steps by which we received it! I do want to tell you two stanzas of Fra Gregory, and I think you will feel that you have seen Miss Matty's soul.

" 'Lord, in the shop at Nazareth,
Was not the scent of cedar Thine,
Mixed with Thy work a country breath
As is this lavender with mine?

'Ever the while I sow or reap,
My sick folk seem about me, Lord.
As were I shepherd, they the sheep;
Their cares smite through me like a sword.'

"I have many things to thank you for, Mrs. Langdon, but for nothing am I more grateful than for this opportunity of meeting Miss Matty Hayward and catching a glimpse of such a sweet, lovable, loving saint. In any plan you may make for her, please, please, let me help all that I possibly can.

"I shall mail this now before going to bed, and shall wait for your telegram to-morrow before going on to Winsted.

"Yours affectionately,

"Alice B. Prescott."

"ELMKNOLL,
"January 4.

"*Dear Evelyn:*

"She is here at last. I had Thomas, my man, escort me to Milwaukee yesterday afternoon. My lameness is an unspeakable nuisance, but Thomas is a competent fellow, and Alice knows how to obey orders.

"She did not come easily, but she never quite dared refuse me, you remember, and the old habit held. Alice will tell you details.

"The country air will do her good, and she will find plenty of poor to do for here, if she can't cure herself of the passion.

"The argument which finally brought her was that my health is so precarious that I need her, — humbug, you understand, but I knew it would appeal, and I did not wish to stay over night in that wretched hotel.

"Thomas saw to packing her things, and I shall see that the house and lot are sold for a respectable sum. She has always been a fool financially.

"It is my most earnest wish that you allow your son to bring you here for a visit with us before the winter is over. You cannot disappoint us, Evelyn. The Lord knows there are few ties left to us here, and He must find it irritating

to see us count too confidently on their lasting powers.

"Your sincere friend,
"SUSAN DEVEREUX LANGDON."

"*Dear Catherine and Alice:*

"We had the most fun here in the big house while Mrs. Langdon was away! And now little Miss Matty is here, and she is the cunningest thing you ever saw, and Mrs. Langdon is so big and gruff with her, and takes care of her the way a big St. Bernard might pet a kitten.

"We are going back to the Hall to-morrow and have everything all ready to greet you when you come. Dr. Weed has decided that my cough was n't whooping, after all! But I've had a grand vacation, so I don't care. Mrs. Prexy has asked us both over to dinner to-morrow night to celebrate Jonathan's birthday. We've got a sled for him and we've had the finest times to-day sliding down this lawn to the street.

"Frieda has just begun writing Thank you notes, and is as cross as a bear, that's why I'm writing to you. She says she thinks it ought to be against the law to *send* Christmas presents. Delivered in person, they are n't so bad, because the thanks can be paid at once! And Hannah used to call her *Dankbarkeit* in Germany because she was so enthu-

siastic about saying Thank you. I'm afraid when she gets home next summer her mother won't let her come back in the fall, she'll find her so changed.

"Here she comes now, and we're going out for a walk and to buy Miss Matty some violets at the greenhouse. She likes flowers better than anything.

"Yours in a rush,

"HILDA.

"P. S. *Ihr seid alle beide liebe Mädchen.* Come soon home. FRIEDA."

CHAPTER NINE

A PATCHWORK EVENING

"HANNAH honey, come go shopping."

"Shopping? It's long after five, and supper's at six."

"I know, but I have thirty-seven cents in my purse, and I burn to spend it. Besides I want to wear my new suit."

"It is a beauty." Hannah looked admiringly at Catherine's tall slender figure in the close-fitting brown coat and sharply pleated skirt. "And your Christmas furs are the prettiest things and that soft beaver hat is lovely on your scarlet hair."

Catherine resented the insult with a little toss of her muff, but said again: "Come on. I really hanker after Main Street and the lights. It's only a minute's walk, and I have to go to the cobbler's."

Hannah had a red cap on her head in an instant, swung herself into a long red coat while she pranced down stairs, shoving her hands into heavy gloves as she left the building. They stopped for a minute on the high veranda and looked down

at the little village, lights sparkling through the wintry trees.

"It's like home," said Catherine. "I love little towns as such."

"It is n't like home to me, but I love it too. I love everything to-night. But there's an awfully cozy feeling about a little doll town like this, specially on winter evenings when the lights come on early and people are hurrying home to supper. It's Christmassy even after Christmas. Don't you like to look in at people's windows? I shall never pull my shades down, if I live in a college town, at least, so the poor homesick things can see in. Look at that grate-fire. And a baby. *That*'s real life!"

Hannah heaved such a tremendous sigh that Catherine laughed aloud.

"Yesterday you were declaiming about the beauties of single life and professional careers for women, and here you are, yearning for a domestic hearth."

Hannah's voice took on a rueful tone. "I can't help it. I get enthusiastic over every sort of thing. When I was in Europe I wanted to buy a house and live in every pretty place we went to. And I always want to get acquainted with new people whether they 're nice or not. And I want to be a suffragette and a society woman and a trained

nurse and a grand opera singer and a teacher here at Dexter and have a home with seventeen boys and one good little girl with brown eyes and straight hair. And yet I 'd rather like to be a lawyer."

They turned into Main Street now, its two blocks of length alight with show windows, though the few shoppers not already at home were all on the way there. Catherine stopped at a little shop, over the door of which a wooden boot hung stiffly. Inside, by a fly-specked lamp, the leather-aproned cobbler secured the buttons on her trim street shoe while Hannah, idly waiting, examined the two-years-old calendar on the wall among red, tan, and black skins, hanging by their tails from a shelf where tied-up heels were piled. She pulled off her glove and dropped on her knee to button the shoe for Catherine when the cobbler had finished. As she stood up to go, brushing scraps of leather from her coat, she sniffed regretfully.

"I love stale tobacco
reached
esting as c
the nicest
Scots and
place!"

"Horrors!" Catherine
breath of the crisp January air.
thusiasms, but I draw the l

down at the end of the street at that pretty pink afterglow through the bare trees. That 's enough to console you for the loss of the autumn leaves."

"Did you see the air-ship headlight last night? It passed right over the college. You were off at that concert, though. Frieda and I saw it. She would n't get excited. Said they had been having them in Germany for a long time, as though that was the same as her seeing one! I reminded her that they are using American machines there, and that kept her still for a minute. O Cathy darling, I 'm so hungry. Let 's get some of those luscious-looking things!"

It was a bakery window, invested by the magic of the hour and their appetites with a charm unknown by daylight. Catherine exchanged ten of her remaining twenty-seven cents for a block of sticky cinnamon rolls and two thick patty-pan cakes, thinly frosted with chocolate, and they returned to the street, munching comfortably from the open paper bag. At a dry-goods store while the clerks spread white cloths over the counters for the night, they bought a paper of pins for Alice, who was never supplied. The proprietor of the New York 5, 10 and 25 Cent Store opened his door in person to allow them to enter and prowl around, looking for a souvenir to take to Frieda. They selected a china lamb, made in

Germany, after which Hannah persuaded Catherine to purchase for her a china pig with a slit in his side for money, standing treat herself to the extent of a nickel's worth of twenty-cent candy, the wheezy storekeeper patiently waiting till the transactions were completed.

"Now my money's all spent and I owe you eight cents on that pig, so let's go home. Supper will be ready and we won't have time to dress, but that does n't matter. Did you ever see such a pewtery-looking moon? Like a great round chop-plate. O Hannah mavourneen, it's joy just to be living. And there's Priscilla's patching party coming off this evening!"

For three days the lucky recipients of small green pod-shaped cards bearing the message:

PRISCILLA PERKINS
AT THE PEA-POD
PATCHWORK PIECING
8 P. M. SATURDAY.

had been at once the scorn and envy of their friends and roommates.

The craze for patchwork quilts had been brought into college in the early fall by an enthusiast, and, though slow to start, had contrived to hold its own through the season of athletics and out-of-door excursions, not dying out wholly when

the manufacture of Christmas presents consumed all the leisure of the college day, even encroaching upon classes and chapel. Now in the desert stretch after the holidays and before examinations, the faithful found in their piecing occupation, rest, and entertainment. The scoffers, seeing the substantial piles of pieces already accumulated, began too late to regret their chosen attitude, and at last Priscilla's invitations, sent only to the genuine lovers of calico, turned all raillery into open envy.

No. 47 had from the start been devoted to the new cult. Frieda, to whom needlework was as natural as breathing, took it up as a matter of course; Catherine's taste for quaintness won her over; Hannah, as usual, found herself involuntarily interested, and Alice, recognizing the practical value of quilts and the convenience of having simple hand-work always ready to pick up at odd moments, joined the ranks willingly. "I 'm glad," she said, "of something continuous and lasting about my life this year. Even my courses all run out at the end of the semester, but this quilt will go on forever!"

At five minutes of eight the four, workbags in hand, shut their own door and set out for Priscilla's first-floor single.

At the foot of the stairs they were waylaid by

a dapper gentleman with a waxed mustache and a most engaging smile.

"If you will allow me to take but a few moments of your time, young ladies, it will be my privilege to show you some gowns that will delight you."

"Gowns? Where?"

"In the parlor. Miss Watkins — the matron, you call her, — has allowed me that I present my gowns there. They come direct from Paris. From Michigan Avenue. I am an importer. My card — " and he handed an engraved pasteboard to Catherine with a flourish.

"Let's see them," decided Hannah, "I love clothes. But we can't buy anything. We all get our winter things when we are home for Christmas."

The gentleman made a deprecating gesture. "It is entirely unnecessary that you buy. I show them for the joy of it. The æsthetic pleasure chiefly. A beautiful gown is a matter of art. Such art should be taught in your college. Soon it will. I myself shall live to see the day when there is a Chair of Applied Dressing in every ladies' college in America. Permit me." He stooped to pick up the workbag which had slipped from Frieda's finger. As he lifted it, the patchwork pieces flew from it, and the little gentleman flew

after them over the polished floor, gathering bits of bright green calico, but discoursing none the less fluently on the color, line and tone of costumes.

The parlor was transformed. Upon supports of the scarecrow model, were displayed ball-gowns and négligées, lingerie waists, and party capes. With unfeigned interest the girls examined one after another, their eloquent guide calling attention to the finer points.

"All the young ladies wear these mantles. They are of a perfection. Of a cool evening nothing could be more desirable. Yes, that one of peridot green in corded silk is *chic* and graceful, but this one would better become you, Mademoiselle."

He placed the long cloak affectionately over Hannah's shoulders. Coming home late as she had, she was still wearing her school dress of greenish gray wool, with a big black bow and black pipings.

"This mantle, ladies, you will observe," the showman went on, caressing its folds, "is made of white *lacet* braid, laid loosely over rose Dresden silk. You see the lining" — he threw it back, "several thicknesses of chiffon, the colors shading, blending, the palest pink as of a sunset cloud, the pink of the sea-shell, of the coral, of the wild rose, of the American beauty finally. Warm and

practical also! And the style, of a simplicity and effectiveness!"

Alice and Catherine were listening with frank amusement, enjoying the contrast between Hannah's school girl dress and the ethereal garment. But Hannah herself, her cheeks flushed and her eyes bright, turned slowly before the long mirror and studied her reflection with supreme satisfaction.

"How much is it?" she asked presently, with a note of wistfulness.

"The price?" The salesman seemed a bit regretful that anything so sordid should be mentioned in connection with those shades of rose chiffon. He consulted an oval tag and said indifferently: "One hundred and fifty dollars. It is an exclusive model."

Hannah's mouth pouted with disappointment, and she slowly slipped the cloak off from her sturdy shoulders.

"It would be so nice to have to slip on when I go to chapel chilly evenings, especially in fall and spring," she murmured. "But that's more than my clothes allowance for six months. I'm sorry. It's so loose and easy!"

Alice swallowed her laughter, and Catherine turned to find Frieda, who was wholly lost in admiration of a marvellous blue confection in an opposite corner.

"*Himmlisch! Welche wunderliche Farbe!*" she was exclaiming to herself as the others came up to her. The showman was quick to take his cue.

"That is one of the latest tints, libellula blue, from the well-known insect of that name. You observe the idea of the insect is carried throughout the costume. The long narrow lines of the back, the pointed tail-like train. Here is the insect itself conventionalized, worked in the beads of jet upon the panels."

"Why, it's a dragon-fly!" exclaimed Alice. "Who ever heard of its being called a libellula?"

"'Sh!" Frieda's expression indicated that Alice's remarks were as out of place as conversation in church, and the showman, turning to Hannah and Frieda, continued his exposition of the gown. "These *empiècements* of silver satin running from shoulder to belt, and the *pailleted* belt itself of jet, do you not find them effective? With your fair blonde hair you could wear this well, Miss."

"O Catherine, see this. Did you ever in your life? What is it?"

The showman looked grieved, for Alice's tone was wholly irreverent.

"The robe-manteau," he said, with what should have been crushing quietness. "Every lady of fashion knows the inconvenience of carrying a

wrap. This model shows the wrap forever present, and yet serving only when it is desirable."

"Where? Oh, that bunch? And she wears it all humped up behind her, and when she feels a draught, just unpins it and pulls it up over her shoulders? I see! Of all the convenient arrangements! She'd need a maid always with her."

"Not so much as this lady would," asserted Catherine. "I've been examining this one everywhere and I can't find a fastening, except these handsome pins."

"That is one of the draped gowns." The little Frenchman's eyes half closed in dreamy rapture as he adjusted a line here and a fold there on the lath frame. "The wearisomeness of fastening buttons, hooks and eyes — by this simple device all that is avoided. Madame stands merely, and her maid drapes the gown about her, fastening it here, there, with a touch, as though a butterfly had alighted. The pins allow of much individuality, also. One of my patrons has pins shaped like lyres, set with pearls and lapis lazuli, exclusively designed for her, and not to be copied. A charming variation."

"Can't even do her own designing! Has to have it done for her. Poor Madame!" And Alice shook her head compassionately.

The salesman was beginning a description of a

moss green foulard trotting frock, when a new group of curious girls appeared in the doorway, and Catherine and Alice drew their young roommates away, though Hannah still looked longingly at the "warm" cloak and Frieda cast a farewell glance of admiration at the libellula blue.

"He must be a new man," said Alice. "He will waste his car fare coming out here. I suppose he thought Dexter was a stylish boarding-school."

"Miss Eliot would n't have let him in if she had been in town," said Catherine. "But he was much more entertaining than the lady with the holeproof stockings and the wear-forever court-plaster last month."

"Did you hear about the agent that Miss Eliot would n't allow in the grounds yesterday? I just happened to see him on the car and heard him scolding about it to the conductor. He had a comb which would dye your hair any color and last a lifetime, and costs only three dollars. I should have bought one if I had had the money!"

"Red never dyes well," declared Alice. "O *Kinder*, do hurry up. What are you dawdling so for?"

"I'm going to have a cloak like that the very first day I'm grown up," announced Hannah, arriving with Frieda.

"Heaven send you a prince and a golden coach

or a latest model limousine to go with it, then, and don't let me see you trailing it around in a street-car," said Catherine sternly. "Here we are, Priscilla, but it's going to be an awful come-down to put our minds on green calico after we've been feasting our souls on *couleur de rose* and libellula blue!"

"Are you all working on green?" asked Margaret, wondering, as each of the four produced green patches from her bag as soon as she had squeezed herself into a seat on an already occupied couch or window-box or curled her feet under her on the floor. "I should think you'd get them mixed."

"They're all for the same quilt," explained Alice. "And it's to go to the one of us who is married first. The color's a compromise. None of us wanted it — so we chose it."

"That's the way a good many things go in No. 47," gibed somebody cheerfully. "What colors did you want?"

"I wanted pink in a basket pattern," said Catherine. "I can't wear it daytimes, but I thought a quilt would be just the place for it. And Frieda of course wanted her beloved blue — libellula shade, I suppose. What was it you voted for, Hannah?"

"Red; and Alice wanted yellow with little

daisies in the design, so there was n't anything we could get, really, but green. None of us cares, though, for we don't expect to be married first."

"None of you?" cried Priscilla. "There's more than your eyes that's Irish, Hannah Eldred! I wonder which of you will get the quilt."

"Hannah," said Hilda, positively. "Alice will be too busy. Catherine would take years to make up her mind. Frieda may be engaged first, German women always marry, you know, but there will be so many solemn ceremonies beforehand, and so much linen to get ready that Hannah will probably pick up a likely young man and have it all over with, while Frieda's preparing."

"I'll take time enough to get a cloak like that one downstairs in my trousseau, whatever happens," said Hannah. "What a tight fit we are in this room, Priscilla! It really is a good deal like a pea pod."

"Don't you like the name?" asked Priscilla, reaching for her neighbor's scissors. "I always wanted to have a name for my room. All the stories I used to read when I was little had names like The Nest or The Cocoon for college or boarding-school girls' rooms. And I planned, when I was eleven, to room some day with a lovely creature named Phyllis Pemberly, which I thought sounded very aristocratic, and we'd call our room

The Pea Pod. When I got here I was put in with Kate Garrison, and she thought names were silly! So, as I kept on rooming with her always, I had to wait till she graduated, and then I took a single, so that I should n't get out of college without satisfying my one youthful ambition. I've grown so fat this year on senior dramatic rehearsals that I think I closely resemble that one fat pea you often find in a pod, filling it to bursting."

"What could I call my room?" asked Margaret. "Warren suggests rabbits. I might call it The Hutch."

"Or The Chafing-dish," put in Hilda. "When Frieda roomed with me Miss Eliot called ours Hilda Gard (old word for garden, you know, out of King Arthur or something) because she said Frieda watched over me like a policeman and a nurse and a proctor. I'm just lost without her this year. Don't you think you could take me into 47, girls?"

"I sometimes think one of us will have to move out in your favor," said Catherine. "Frieda seems to miss her responsibility. She's deteriorating awfully — and she does n't know what it means, either," laughing at Frieda's well-known expression, assumed while mentally assimilating a word for future investigation.

"Girls, please let me have the floor!" said Priscilla suddenly. "No, you need n't get up, Helen. I don't care for the part of it you're sitting on. But I do want to explain something that I feel rather guilty about. There's another guest coming."

"What of it? She can sit on the desk if we're really compressed as much as possible."

"That's not it. But I don't believe you 'll like my having asked her. I did it on impulse. I was in her room on an errand and happened to see a wonderful old quilt on her bed. She does n't cover it up with a couch cover, and it was the Whig Rose design, and I had never seen it, and I found she had others with her, because she does n't like to use college blankets, so I just asked her to come along to-night and show them to you — and I've been worried about it ever since."

"Who is she? And why on earth are you worried?" marvelled the others.

Priscilla hesitated an instant and then said: "Miss P. G. Eastman."

After a second of silence a chorus of little cries broke out.

"Not Flavia E.? Not affable Flavia E.? Adorable Flavia E.?"

"And your room so little and sharp-cornered?"

"We did n't think it of you, Perky darling!"

"To get us all in here, tight, and then let that crosspatch drop on us like a portcullis!"

"You don't smother your guests with roses, Pris. You just take a whack at them with an ax."

Priscilla laughed nervously. "O, I know. I know. I was sure you'd all slaughter me for it. I don't know why I did it. I'm scared of her myself. She has such a look about the mouth as though she had eaten shredded scissors for breakfast and they were n't perfectly digested. But she seemed a lonely soul, and the quilts — I did n't ask her till nine."

"Hush! I hear her common-sense step in the corridor. It's all right, Pris. We're all together and we can help each other bear it. I know her. She never *quite* kills any one." Hannah, who sat behind the door, pulled it hospitably open, withdrawing behind it as she did so.

Fortunately the dreaded lady had brought with her a load of quilts. It was easy for two or three to rise to meet her and relieve her of her burden, spreading out the quilts on the study table with real interest and admiration. In the confusion and crowding to see, with Miss Eastman naming the quaint patterns, calling attention to the elaborate stitching in the white blocks, and to the curious old calicoes of the days when calico was

treasured more highly than silk, Priscilla's fears were set at rest. When the quilts had all been shown, they were folded up by respectful hands, and as Priscilla immediately removed the screen from around her tea-table and produced thickly nutted little cookies and a pot of "instantaneous chocolate," the conversational ice had no opportunity to form.

Over the chocolate cups, the talk had safely skimmed such topics as silk hosiery, Ben Greet, surf bathing, trained animals and peanut butter, when Helen Gray inadvertently addressed Florence Marvin as "Flossy."

Miss Eastman, who had been quiescent for some time, "acting almost like a real live human," as Hannah expressed it, now became her austere self again, and fixing poor Helen with a severe gaze, said: "What a shame to miscall a dignified name like Florence!"

There was an instant's hush. Then Flossy, who had as much dignity as a white kitten, choked into her chocolate and retired behind Helen's shoulder, while Margaret quickly asked Miss Eastman some inane question about her courses, and Hannah in a remote corner murmured ecstatically: "O affable Flavia E.! Agreeable Flavia E.!"

"Pease."

The door was just ajar, and in the crack, not

quite so high as the knob, there appeared a large brown eye and a little straight nose, while a soft little voice repeated: "Pease. *Di grazia.* Want to tum in."

"Here's somebody come to your P Party, Priscilla," cried Hilda, sitting nearest, and Hannah pulled the door back against her own lap, allowing a little girl to enter shyly.

"What a darling!" Hilda put her arm around the little figure. "Who is she? I never saw her."

A darling she assuredly was, a tiny tot of about three years, with big dark eyes, clear dark skin and black curls. She wore a warm little red wool dress, and around her neck hung a string of corals with a tiny cross.

"Pass the cookies, Peg," cried Alice. "Give her one, Hilda. It can't hurt her. What is your name, dear?" And Alice, whose sister heart warmed to every child she saw, climbed over three intervening girls and dropped on her knees before the little stranger. "Tell me your name, won't you, please? *Di grazia.*"

"Ma-ri-a." The answer came in soft Italian accents.

"Sweet!" murmured the girls, and Alice took the little hands in hers.

"Where is your mamma, Maria?"

"*Non so. Ho perduto la mamma.* All-a lost-a."

"She must be the child of the new maid who came to-day, after Miss Watkins dismissed the incompetent creature we had all the fall," said Miss Eastman. "The mother is an Italian. It seemed to me unwise to take in the child, but Miss Watkins persisted in doing it."

"She's pretty as a picture," declared Margaret.

"And so is her mother," said Catherine. "I saw her this afternoon. She will be wondering where the baby is. Hilda, why don't you slip out and find her?"

Hilda got up reluctantly. Little Maria, standing by Alice, let her bright eyes wander from one girl to another. Suddenly she made a little run to Hannah, and settled herself in Hannah's lap, touching her gold beads admiringly.

"*Bellissimo!*" she said, rolling them between her fingers.

"Yours is pretty, too," said Hannah, pleased by the child's having chosen her, if only for her trinket. "I used to have a string of corals just like yours, Maria, and they had a little cross, too. With a dent in it, where I cut my first tooth! Why!" she exclaimed in surprise, "so has this one a dent exactly like it!"

Miss Eastman started. "If that woman has been stealing!"

But Hilda appeared in the doorway, followed by a young Italian woman.

"Here she is, Teresa. Maria, here's your mamma."

Hannah, lifting Maria, clumsily stood up and faced the mother.

"*Dio mio, signorina,*" cried Teresa. "It is yourself! The pretty little *signorina.* The little one wears yet your necklace, as you see, and the little cross has brought us good fortune. Maria, it is the little lady who has named you. And the silver spoon the good papa has given you."

Hannah had held her breath, the color coming and going in her cheeks, and now she gave a long Oh of perfect rapture.

"My own little steamer baby! My little Mary, Star of the Sea. I named her all myself. And I gave her my corals. Is n't it like a fairy-story? Now," and Hannah squared her shoulders as she stood up after kissing Maria and setting her on her feet, "now I don't care if I can't have that *lacet* cloak with the rose chiffon lining!"

COLLEGE CALENDAR

College exercises begin at 8:30 A. M. . . . January 6
Semester examinations . . . . . January 26–30
Second semester begins . . . . . February 3
Spring vacation begins at 11:30 A.M. . . . . March 25

CHAPTER TEN

SUNDAY MORNING

"I CAN'T go to church. I must count my bones."

"Whatever do you mean, Frieda?" Catherine, correct to the last detail, stepped out of her excessively orderly bedroom as the last bell for church began to ring. The church which she attended as regularly as the minister himself was exactly four minutes' walk from Main Hall. The bell rang for five. She therefore had a half minute to spend on Frieda, who was dawdling over a breakfast of buns and jelly in the parlor window.

"Just what I say. I cut gym yesterday, no, Friday, to go on that ten-mile tramp with Hilda, and the Weed said I must learn all the names of the bones before to-morrow morning. I have a fine joke, though. She did not say what language and I am learning them in German. I shall write them in German script, too. She knows nothing but bones and pills, the woman! Not even whooping-cough!"

"You know how I feel about Sunday studying," said Catherine, turning away. "If you have n't

got your work done by Saturday night, it ought to be as though Sunday did n't exist. You ought to get up early Monday or flunk, and serve you right for such poor managing. But I suppose it's useless to hope to convince you. Good-by!" And throwing a well-gloved kiss to soften her severity, Catherine joined the rustling, hastening church procession in the corridor. Alice had started long before for the microscopic Moravian church away across the river. Hannah, after spending an hour and more in lazy visiting among her friends, had slammed her own door shut and begun racing into her clothes, fuming at the necessity that drove her. Now she burst out, pulling on her gloves, while her hat flopped about her head and her shoes flapped about her feet.

"You'll have to do my shoes and the back of my dress, Frieda," she complained, "while I pin my hat and button my gloves. I shan't wear a veil. I do wish there was n't any rule about church. I'd go, just the same, and I should n't feel so beastly cross while I was doing it."

Frieda lifted Hannah's left foot to her lap and leisurely buttoned the shoe, digging the hook now and then into Hannah's flesh and paying no heed to her ouches.

"The bones of the foot are *die Fusswurzel, der Mittelfuss, die Zehenglieder*. Such words one

can spell without difficulty. They are reasonable. But these English! It is hard to hold their shapes in mind long enough to find them in the dictionary. There! Now the other foot. You will be very late."

"That's better than cutting. You certainly will get into trouble, Frieda, but I don't care, since you won't listen to warnings."

"I shall probably be told to learn the bones of the church, *nicht wahr?* Organ, pulpit, minister, choir, altar, *und so weiter*. Now I will fasten your pretty back, and you shall go. The bones of the back are *das Wirbelbein* —"

But Hannah, snatching a prayer-book from the bookcase, had dashed out and away, and the heathenish little Frieda was alone.

Not only alone in 47, but alone in the big building. When the last bun, smeared freely with jelly, had been eaten, the last bone confidently christened, Frieda sat, staring out on the quiet lawn, and meditated.

She had been brought up to believe that certain small points of etiquette were almost as vital as matters of morality. She had respected any authority simply because it was authority. Hannah's manners and morals had seemed to her shocking in Berlin at first; but before the Eldreds left they had so far won Frieda's affection that

she overlooked some of their peculiarities and found others even interesting. Then, when she herself had come to America, she had tried first to condemn the whole nation for every respect in which it differed from Germany, had listened to Karl's brotherly advice and tried to conform to the ways of the Romans for a while, and now had reached the point where she had gleefully thrown all rules of conduct to the winds, acting wholly as the spirit, and a most freakish spirit it proved to be, suggested. A whimsical girl is sure of popularity, and a troop of irresponsibles flocked about Frieda, ready for anything, from sleeping in the corridors to ringing the chimes at midnight, beating out upon them the classical melody: "What 's the use of moonlight when there 's no one there to love?"

"At least," Catherine and Alice would sigh to each other comfortingly, "she does new tricks, not the old boarding-school ones of stacking rooms and making pie beds and the like. It really was funny when she slipped around to everybody's room to say Good Night after the lights were out, and left a bright green streak on every one's forehead to startle the mirrors next morning."

"Yes, and it was amusing when she changed all the newspapers and magazines in the reading-room and put in those of last year. But think of

the work it meant to collect them all from the library! I know she thought it was worth while, though, when Current Topics met in the afternoon, and everybody gravely reported news of last year. It's all well enough for her, for she seems able to get her lessons in half the time the rest of us need, but she leads all those other children into pranks and they don't keep their work up."

"Frieda's horror of low grades is the only trait of a sedate order she has kept. I tell you, I wish I had had a German school training when I see how thoroughly she does her work and so quickly."

"Inheriting a professor's brains may have something to do with it. But what can we do about her impishness? It grows worse all the time."

Catherine shook her head slowly. "I don't know, I'm sure. Hannah does n't seem to notice the way she's going, but Hannah has n't time to think. She has so many friends and so much to do, and each thing she does seems so extremely important. I truly believe that so long as Hannah is occupied, that's all she cares about. It might be slumming or it might be building clothespin corn cribs, it would n't much matter. She has n't the remotest conception of the pleasure you and I can get in reading or in mere dreaming — neither has Frieda, — but she's satisfied with simple

legitimate pursuits and Frieda wants something more spicy!"

"If we can keep her from falling out with the Faculty seriously, I shall be thankful. I've tried kindergarten methods till I'm weary. She won't take suggestions, and she won't be diverted from her naughty purposes. So far, she has n't done anything bad, but she gets more and more daring. I suppose she will keep on till she finds herself in a scrape. I don't know what else could stop her!"

"Maybe she'll grow tired of it, and be good for a change. And we can keep on loving her and, above all, not laugh at her pranks too much. Miss Eliot says one of the most fatal things for a college girl is to get a reputation for being funny! She said she had seen principles and traditions, manners and morals give way to the strain of trying to live up to such a reputation. Did you hear Hannah telling about that silly Brower girl on the train with her, Christmas vacation, who did up a bunch of celery and parsley and a withered rose and sent it in by the porter to a newly married couple who had just gone into the diner? Hannah said she could have clapped her hands with delight when the porter came back, bringing the foolish bouquet and saying: 'The gentleman said you must have been mistaken!' Carrie Brower is a

decent enough girl, but she got into the way of being laughed at constantly, and lost her head. And that's what I fear for Frieda."

Frieda was not unconscious of the fact that her friends worried about her. The knowledge added a piquancy to her performances. As she sat, looking out over the lawn this Sunday morning, she was perfecting the details of a chain letter scheme, which pleased her mightily. She had concocted a letter on the model of one which Genevieve had shown her, asking each recipient to send a copy of an enclosed quotation to Miss Eastman, and then to extend the chain by copying the letter three times, promising in mystic terms a heavenly blessing to those who complied and a rather alarming fate to those who failed to do so. She had gathered names and addresses of people in small towns all over the country, and had contrived a means of concealing her own trail altogether.

"It will be grand fun to have her get forty and fifty letters a day, for it ought to work as well as that, even if half of them refuse to have anything to do with it. And every letter saying:

" '*In her tongue is the law of kindness!*'

"I'll send out six to start it. Three times six is eighteen, three times eighteen, fifty-four, three

times that — O, it makes my head swim to think of it, by the time it gets really going!"

Frieda hugged herself with delight, and then sobered a little.

"It will be a lot of work for Alice to have so much more mail, but I will pity her and help her, and it will serve her right, for I really believe she prays for me, and nobody could stand that! She is sitting there in the little church now and they are all singing '*Erbarme Dich unser*' and she is asking the Lord to make me more *artig*. She is good and kind and sweet, but there are many things she does not understand. I think I am good for her!

"Hannah is not worried about me. She does not think about me. When I am cranky she handles me like a raw egg, by instinct. And when I am merry she is merry with me, because it is her nature. And when I work she leaves me alone, because she forgets me. But if I were in trouble she would save me. She would wear herself out for me. If any one were to slander me she would fight a duel for me. She is a dear, is Hannah.

"And Catherine is lovely. That is the trouble with her. She is not a prig, but she expects every one to be like herself, and who could be? What she reads, what she eats, what she wears, what

she says, what she thinks, all is pure and exquisite. Everything comes to her through a filter. She does not mean to judge others unfairly, but she applies her own standards to all, unconsciously. She loves Hannah, but I have felt her shrink when Hannah said 'Piffle!' as if she had seen her put her knife into her mouth or bite her fingers. She loves Alice in spite of the way she does her hair, and she sees atrocious taste in my studying on Sunday. But she is not spoiled. She does not even know that the whole college has a crush on her. She would hate it if she did! And Miss Eliot says that such a sense of civic responsibility as Catherine Smith's in one man's mind could save a corrupt city. She has no conceit. She is even shy. She lives up to all she asks of others, and does so without thinking of it. There is nothing to criticise her for, except that she is too flawless; but that is a grave fault in a human being.

"Now I have preached myself a sermon and I will go and play myself a hymn and sing it."

In the heelless slippers she padded quietly down the hollow corridor to the bare dancing room. There she seated herself on the piano stool, and opening a hymn book which she had brought with her, played straight through from "When morning gilds the skies," to "Abide with

me," not singing, but humming the words in a monotone.

Miss Eliot had left church early because of a sudden faintness due to the "thick religious air" which the janitor and ushers seemed to hold sacred from week to week. As she strolled up the broad walk from the Lodge, Frieda's hymn-tunes floated out to her. Curious, she passed her own door and followed the music. She stood in the open door of the dancing room and listened, till Frieda became conscious of a presence and turned around.

"Are you ill?"

"No," answered Frieda, getting up. "I had to learn the bones."

Miss Eliot looked at her in silence, not reproachfully, but as though she were studying.

"Are they listed in the hymn book?"

"No. I learned them, and then I preached myself a sermon, and then I came down here to have the music."

"Will you tell me about the sermon you preached to yourself? They are the most profitable sort, in my opinion. If I could be sure that each of the girls would do that on a Sunday morning, I would gladly repeal the church attendance rule. You know, 'Some keep the Sabbath going to church, Some keep it staying at home,' is very

true. But it is harder for the average person to keep it staying at home, amd we have to make college rules for the average person. Come, sit down here on the poor old sofa with the ribs showing through, and tell me about your sermon."

Frieda's usually inscrutable eyes — she had so perfectly the art of looking expressionless that Hilda once told her her eyes looked like the pulp of a grape! — met Miss Eliot's now, somewhat wistfully. Frieda had never been a devotee of "Faculty." Once a year, strongly re-enforced, she made a round of duty calls, and of her own accord she occasionally ran in to see Mademoiselle Corinne and the motherly Fräulein Meyer, but she had never had conversation with Miss Eliot, except in the most perfunctory manner. Now a sudden impulse, the result, perhaps, of all Alice's and Catherine's wistful thoughts of her, led her to seat herself beside Miss Eliot.

"My thoughts were in German. I cannot put them into English smoothly. And it was not a sermon at all. I was just thinking about the girls."

Miss Eliot waited.

Suddenly Frieda broke into eager speech, pouring out in a confused stream her opinions of people, her vague discontent with herself, her inability to understand many of the prejudices by which

she felt herself misjudged. Miss Eliot listened competently, sympathizing and appreciating, though without comment, until Frieda had quite delivered herself.

"I've known so many girls, Frieda, and I was a girl myself! I think I see what is the trouble. You want some absolute standard of judgment, something that shall not vary with locality or age or temperament. And because you have not found one, you have tried to get on with no standards at all. And you are n't satisfied with that, either. Take just one point that vexes you: Sunday observance. You have been brought up with one set of traditions, and the other girls with another. None of you have seized upon the principle underlying. You throw all the emphasis on the details. It is not a question of sewing or not sewing, studying or not studying, on the Sabbath. It is a question of the purpose of the seventh day and how that purpose can best be fulfilled. Many a girl has felt hopelessly muddled over that problem, and I have found just one way of helping my girls solve it. That is, to suggest that they think carefully over the meaning of Sunday and then, instead of worrying about what *not* to do on that day, to spend the day itself in doing certain things which are unquestionably in keeping with its spirit. A wiser and more

experienced teacher than I taught her pupils that a perfect Sabbath must contain rest, worship, beneficence, and meditation. She said that when those four had been attended to, the rest of the day, if there was any time left, would take care of itself. You might try it for a few weeks and see how you feel about it.

"As for other matters that trouble you, apply the same principle. Put that good brain of yours to work. See what is involved, and then live up to your own determined standard."

"But," Frieda frowned, "the very thing the girls criticise me for is that I do make my own laws. They say I have no right to."

"Law-making ought to be a serious business. Following one's own impulses and using one's wits only to defend a course rashly adopted is not law-making. I venture to prophesy, Frieda, that if you act in accordance with what you really believe to be right and honest and *considerate*, you will meet with more love and gratefulness than criticism, — or if you are condemned you will have, at least, the comfort of your own conscience. Don't try to copy the others, or to be what they wish you to be. Just be your own best friend, cultivating the qualities which you really admire, and letting the others die a natural death. What do you think of my program?"

"I think it's bully!"

Miss Eliot laughed aloud.

"In just one point, one's conscience cannot be a sufficient guide, Frieda, and that is language! I am reminded, when I hear you come out with slang when you are most serious, of the old saying: 'Children pick up words as pigeons pease, to utter them again as God shall please.' Your bland use of their worst expressions is curing Dexter girls of slang most effectually. We have much to thank you for, *kleines Mädchen.* Hark, what is that?"

Both started to their feet at a loud clanging sound, accompanied by a monotonous cry:

"Girl lost! Girl lost! Green eyes and yellow hair! Girl lost! Girl lost! Wearing bedroom slippers! Girl lost! A pound of fudge reward!"

"I claim the reward."

Miss Eliot opened the door of the dancing-room and confronted Hannah, who, followed by Hilda, beating the dinner gong, was marching down the corridor shouting through a megaphone, and collecting a crowd as she came.

"I claim the fudge," Miss Eliot repeated as Hannah abandoned the megaphone and seized Frieda around the waist. "And I also claim all you third floor girls as my guests after vespers for a cup of chocolate. Now do take Frieda home

and put her shoes on her, and let me take the gong down to Genevieve as I go, or we can't have any dinner. It is Jonathan Edwards' birthday, and he is to come over. Every table is to have a birthday cake to help him celebrate. Do be on time, and sing to him as he comes in."

CHAPTER ELEVEN

A STUNT PARTY

EXAMINATION week came and went. In the small college, panic and strain are less than in the large one. Merely the difference in numbers is the reason. A cool girl, catching a glimpse of the doctor's office full of nervous, drawn-looking creatures evidently possessed with the idea that flunking is a germ disease and may by seasonable medical attention be routed, is likely to become herself a victim to the unquestionably infectious fear. But the student in the small college sees the frightened as stray individuals, not as collected masses; she knows, too, how her own work has compared with that of others all the year, because none of her classes are so crowded as to prevent individual attention; and even if she be of those who shun the faculty, it is quite impossible to regard as beings of another order the dozen quite normal men and women whom one meets at table, in the halls, at parties, and who are frequently friends of one's father, mother or sister. Still, with all possible alleviation, semester

examinations are not conducive to peace of mind or to gay spirits, and every one felt relieved when the last day of the week set apart for the dreaded rites was over.

"Now my examinations are past, even if I have n't passed them," announced Hannah, "and nobody need criticise me for poor jokes, when I have n't brains enough left to make good ones. I move you, ladies and gentlemen, that we get up a rip-roaring jubilee this evening."

Impromptu affairs are dear to the heart of the college girl, and those who had not run out of town or to friends in the village to recuperate over Sunday fell readily in with Hannah's suggestion, and organized themselves at once into committees on "stunts," "eats," and decorations. A general invitation was given by way of the bulletin board, and an announcement by Miss Eliot at dinner. There was no chapel service that evening, and the party was "called" for eight o'clock in the dancing-room, with the Cozy Corner for dressing-room and generally useful annex.

The decorations were left to Frieda. She promptly gathered together a half dozen followers, whispered with them for a minute, and then went off to make doll dresses for little Maria in the Cozy Corner, while two of her committee borrowed a sheet and hung it across a corner of the dancing-

room near the stage, and another dragged a few chairs, stools and a step ladder behind it.

Catherine, hurrying off down town to see what she could collect for refreshments on short notice and with no surety of payment, was joined by President MacArthur. Upon learning her errand, that most friendly of college presidents stopped at a grocery and ordered half a barrel of apples and a great bag full of salted nuts sent up to the college with his card. "Now may I come?" he asked Catherine, who, radiant with pleasure, invited him and his family to the whole performance. When she returned to college she found Teresa looking for her with a message to call up Alice at Elmknoll, and flew to the telephone.

"Is that you, Catherine? Pris telephoned over to ask me to come and do a monologue, and when I told Mrs. Langdon and Miss Matty about it, they were as interested as could be, and what do you think the dears are doing? They and Martha and Cook are all working like bees, making little cakes, one for everybody. How many do you think there will be? Fifty? Heavens! I imagined more of the girls would be gone. But we can manage. Only I wanted to know if I might n't ask Mrs. Langdon and Miss Matty to come. I'm pretty sure they'd like to. All right. I was sure you'd say so, and I knew it would ease your mind

to know about the cakes. Miss Watkins is going to let you have coffee? Lovely! I have to go and crack nuts now. Even Thomas is at it."

"Now, I do hope the program will be good," worried Catherine. "But I don't believe I'll tell Hannah who is coming. She'll get up the very best thing she can anyway. I wish I could do stunts myself, but I can't. I wonder if she has thought of asking Mademoiselle Corinne to help?"

She had. In fact, she seemed to have thought of everything. Her blue eyes sparkling, her mouth close shut and very earnest, Hannah worked on her program, forgetting dinner, almost forgetting to dress, and compelling every one she asked to do all she asked and even more.

At eight o'clock, Mabel Bacon at the piano, Hannah with her violin and Miss Pidgin with a flute began a cheerful overture, little Maria opened the door, and the guests, who had been gathered in the corridor, sitting on stair railings or perched on radiators, chattering and laughing, a few reading and one much remarked maiden knitting, rushed into the bare room and bestowed themselves on the floor, cross-legged, in large semicircles facing the stage.

"They did n't break their necks decorating —" "What's that?" "Palms! A bank of palms!

Did you ever?" And Frieda's decorations received a most spontaneous clapping, so loud as to drown the orchestra. Through the sheet projected palms, stiff palms and waving palms, palms folded and palms spread, while, seated comfortably behind, in positions in which they could easily watch the stage, Frieda and her friends beamed upon each other at the success of their labor-saving device. When the applause died down, it was gracefully acknowledged by a clapping of the palms themselves, and the delighted audience responded again, till Jonathan Edwards, in a colonial costume, preserved from last year's Washington party, stepped up on the stage and announced:

"Signorina Clarinda, the famous equestrienne."

The red curtain was drawn rather haltingly aside, and Signorina Clarinda, wearing Hannah's habit and hat, bowed low three times, then kissing her hand lightly toward the sofa where "the Prexies" sat, stepped back and allowed her audience an appreciative look at her steed, the kind of horse bred in gymnasiums, with little Maria's cockhorse attached for a head, and a real saddle and bridle, to say nothing of a fine feather boa tail.

Clarinda was a good gymnast, and she proved, under the stimulus of applause, a clever improviser. Her riding act, though short, was suc-

cessful, and the other actors who had been seized with alarm as, through holes in the curtain, they watched the arrival of the distinguished guests, took heart of grace and went bravely through their parts.

Little Effie Hiscomb did some sleight of hand tricks. Margaret Warren improvised limericks to order on subjects proposed by the audience. Alice's monologues, in which many roguish hints were thrown out to the members of the faculty present, brought down the house. Two seniors fenced excellently. An unknown prep gave a clever imitation of a would-be star who had twinkled in the local theatre the week before. The Fleming twins danced delightfully. Mademoiselle Corinne, wearing a picturesque Breton costume, sang a folk song so charmingly, that President MacArthur shouted "Bravo," and his wife sent little Maria up to the stage with the violets she had been wearing, and Miss Matty fluttered her lacy handkerchief in happy applause.

"Lord Fitzroy, Marmaduke of Siam," announced Jonathan Edwards with a suppressed chuckle. Hannah, who had listened to most of the numbers with more anxiety than pleasure, settled down to enjoy this with comfort. There was nothing experimental about Lord Fitzroy. Since Priscilla's first week at Dexter, His Lordship had been

known to fame. She had evoked him first for the cheering of a wretched detachment of homesick freshmen, and his reputation had been mingled with her own ever since. Occasionally Milord had spoken in serious house meetings, carrying his point by the degree of vacuity with which he could state the opposite side of a question. He had even been known to answer a question addressed to Priscilla in the class room. Socially he was indispensable. No party reached a comfortable pitch of hilarity without a demand for a speech from Fitzroy. He confined himself usually to local matters, expressing himself invariably in the same high-bred inane phrases with an intonation which Dexter girls considered the height of drollery. To-night Hannah had been inspired to present the duke in costume, and was prepared to enjoy thoroughly the effect of this innovation upon the audience.

The parted curtains revealed him, standing, in evening dress, a white carnation in his buttonhole, opera hat in hand, his usual innocuous expression upon Priscilla's handsome features, and crowning glory, a real monocle, held in place by muscular effort and a drop of glue!

The audience broke into joyous applause. His Highness bowed.

"I say, it's awfully jolly of you to be so cordial,

don't you know —" he began in his ever successful drawl, and then suddenly stopped. The silly look vanished and a deep blush crept up Priscilla Perkins's cheeks even unto Lord Fitzroy's monocle, and Priscilla Perkins, with one abashed glance at Lord Fitzroy's perfectly creased trousers, turned and fled!

Past the welcoming, approving, delighted faces of the girls, Priscilla had caught a glimpse of two shocked elderly faces, one stern and grim, the other flushed and suffering, with averted eyes.

"Either Mrs. Langdon would have spoken out and told me to dress myself in proper garments or Miss Matty would have swooned," Priscilla declared to the protesting girls who followed her in her flight to her own room. "I left in the nick of time. What a goose I was not to realize that they would think it was dreadful! And it *was* so silly! Girls —" she peeled the downy mustache from her lip, "I fear me much that Lord Fitzroy has this night died the death. At least he did it in full regalia, and that's a comfort to him, though agony for me. I don't dare see Hannah. What will she do for a substitute?"

That was Hannah's perplexity. Pride forbade her cutting down the number of "stunts" on her carefully planned program, but what could she offer at a moment's notice? A pair of palms

beckoned through the screen, and Hannah, recognizing on the third finger of the left hand a pale pink coral like her own, followed the beckoning, and sought Frieda behind the screen.

"Catherine's story-telling," Frieda whispered quickly, "such as she does in the Library at home. Hurry."

As Mabel Bacon helplessly finished the rag time air which she had struck up to cover Priscilla's departure, the audience stirred uncertainly, wishing to make things as easy as possible for the committee, and yet not sure of its cue.

The curtain was drawn aside, and Hannah said: "Catherine will tell us a story."

Then Catherine, pretty in her white gown, looking distressed and a little shy, seated herself in a big wicker chair which had been brought from the Cozy Corner, and began to speak.

Her story-telling was something dear to her, something of which she felt a little shy and proud. Algernon had caught her telling a little girl a story in the Library at home, and had told her that she was better than some "professionals," afterward insisting upon her giving story hours to the children through the summer, hours which had proved most attractive to the fortunate little folk who had formed her audiences. Not once had a grown-up been admitted. She knew nothing

of the laws of the art, had never heard any one tell stories. She tried experiments with the children, studying the effect of one method of procedure and then another, as was suggested by some slight incident. And little by little, she was working out principles and faiths and had come to feel as certain of playing on the children's responsive minds as a musician is of his skill. Years of leisurely reading in great books, of lonely living in solitudes furnished with ghostly figures of old legends of many lands, had given her a remarkable "repertoire," and the summer's practice had perfected her power of gauging her hearers' desires and powers of comprehension. Still, as she faced the college girls to-night, the group of professors, President MacArthur holding little Maria on his knee, Mrs. Langdon and Miss Matty sitting apart and not quite in tune since Priscilla's *faux pas*, she faltered, not knowing how to begin.

"Margaret would love Deirdre's story, and I could recite the lament entire,— but Jonathan Edwards would n't care for it. Or I might tell —"

She lifted her head suddenly, realizing that she was sitting before the audience, silent, and that they were waiting with kindly expectant eyes. They all loved her, and were sure in advance that she would please them. The swift, unconscious impression of that fact swept her into speech.

"Sister Benvenuta was a little nun," she said simply, "and a very lonely little girl besides. Nobody quite understood her, and the Sister Sacristan was even suspicious of her. But she had one playmate, one dear companion, and the love she had in her heart for him made her days light like a corner of the church where the candles are glowing. He was the little Child Christ."

She paused, thinking, and the girls watched and listened. Already she had touched them all, and brought the varying elements into one chord. And now she forgot them entirely. With her eyes upon them, she was rapt away into the Italian convent, seeing the little lame sister with the wistful eyes and the quaint manners moving about among the commonplace others at her daily tasks, and stealing away, whenever she could do so, to the cupboard where the sacred image of the holy Bambino was kept. The audience, listening, saw the little wooden baby, clad only with a hard purple and gold sash, and lying in the dark cupboard with the relics and bits of holy bone, saw him with Sister Benvenuta's compassionating eyes, and felt a righteous indignation at the Sister Sacristan when she locked the cupboard. They saw the little nun in her clean, bare cell, writing letters to the little Child Christ, minute descriptions of the grand festival and the

great show of puppets, saw her slipping the written sheets into the great silver arm near the little image that he might find and read them. And as Catherine's voice went on, quiet, earnest, sweet with sympathy and deep with tenderness, they felt the sadness of the little Child's being left cold and alone, and agreed with Sister Benvenuta that a robe of fair material should be made for him, delicately fashioned and intricately wrought with embroideries. They watched with eager pity and hope the little sister's unskilled fingers striving vainly to cut out the little coat after a pattern of that worn by the gardener's child. They shared her disappointment when her greatest efforts produced nothing lovely, only a botchy little garment with sprawling stitches, where the rich designs should have been. And suddenly Catherine drew a deep trembling breath.

"Then she did the supreme thing. And the Devil came, looking just as he had in the puppet show, with a blue dressing gown and hoofs and a tail. And she pricked her finger for blood to sign her name. So many times she had pricked it before! And she told him exactly which saint's robe it was in the picture over the altar, and he understood and promised. After all, to give your soul for the Child Christ --"

Little Maria, wide-eyed and eager, leaned for-

ward from President MacArthur's knee and listened as though her baby mind understood such things as selling souls!

"When she did not come to midnight mass" (Catherine's voice rang as though a bell were chiming out somewhere and her eyes shone and the light upon her gold hair made President MacArthur murmur "The Blessed Damozel," but his wife lifted a finger of warning), "the lay sister who went to call her saw a light streaming out from her cell and heard soft little noises as though a mother were loving her baby. And the lay sister opened the door and then fell prostrate on the floor, for Sister Benvenuta sat holding the little Child Christ, living and warm and loving, and there was light everywhere.

"The others, coming, found Sister Benvenuta quite dead, holding in her arms the little wooden bambino; and beside her lay a most wondrously wrought little coat — and in the corner of the cell was the puppet Satan twisted and broken."

The spell was broken. The cramped girls sitting on cushions on the hard floor helped each other, groaning, up. The Refreshments Committee and its friends brought in plates and cakes and rolled the barrel of apples to the center of the room. A group around the piano sang one "popular" song after another, between bites of cake

and drinks of frappé. Priscilla in strictly feminine attire demanded thanks for her failure as the means of securing Catherine's number. Miss Eliot and Alice waited upon the Elmknoll guests. Little Maria, for whom "Prexy" was paring apples, clung to Hannah's skirt with one plump little hand and refused to be parted from her. Frieda, still throned upon the stepladder, the curtain sheet draped majestically about her, allowed her minions to toss food to her, and organized a contest in eating salted nuts which had begun to be exciting when Dr. Weed detected and quenched it.

Amidst all the fun and jollity Catherine, smiling and talking with the rest, still remained starry-eyed and gentle, unconsciously aloof, and the others fell away from her with a faint vague awe, as of one who had in actuality seen a blessed vision.

CHAPTER TWELVE

YOUNG FRIENDS AND OLD

An unwonted, almost uncanny silence prevailed in Room 47. At opposite sides of the broad table desk in the center of the room sat Hannah and Frieda. At the small desks on either side of the window sat Alice and Catherine. The sound of a scratching pen, of a turning leaf, and, now and then, of a faint sigh, only emphasized the stillness. Hannah occasionally stole a glance at the three-minute glass before her, shaking it surreptitiously to hasten the slipping sand, and restoring it to its position exactly between the two framed photographs of Karl, facing in opposite directions but exactly alike.

"How do you spell bias?" asked Alice suddenly. "One 's' or two?"

Frieda, not raising her eyes, sang rhythmically:

" 'Those monosyllables which end
In f, or s, or l,
After a single vowel do
With double letters spell —
Except a dozen little words,
And these are mentioned thus:
To wit: this, gas, of, his, was, yes,
As, if, thus, is, has, us.' "

Her roommates listened fascinated.

"Where," they cried with one accord as the last monosyllable dropped from her chanting lips, "where did you learn that ever?"

"Off my teacher," replied Frieda. "There are more parts yet."

"Let's have them, and know the worst."

"I have forgotten some, but one more I know.

> " 'But words with other consonants
> Than f, or s, or l,
> Their final letters double not
> When rightly them we spell.
> Except ten words which we may know
> Wherever they occur;
> And here they are: add, odd, butt, err,
> Inn, egg, buzz, ebb, bunn, purr.'"

" 'Inn, egg, buzz, ebb, bunn, purr,'" repeated Catherine dreamily. "Never did I rightly spell bunn then — you're sure it's not t-h-e-n-n? Every bun I ever ate was single-ended. How many more strange English things have you in your head?"

"Who can tell what you will consider strange?" asked Frieda. "Some things astonish you and some things astonish you not. There is no way to know. English is a speech of mystery."

"That reminds me," said Alice suddenly. "Did I or did I not hear you tell Miss Eastman on the

stairs that you would be geegumsquizzled if you knew where she could find the maid?"

Frieda shrugged her shoulders. "So I should have been. I never can find the maid. I wish Teresa were ours. I am learning much Italian from her. We speak no other."

"I'd hate to see the inside of your head, Frieda," said Hannah speculatively. "It must be a fearful mess. And I should think your tongue would be coated."

"Please, please stop chattering." begged Catherine. "It was so beautifully still and I had almost begun to think in psychological terms, when the spell was broken."

"Frieda stumped me to keep still as long as she did," said Hannah blithely, "but she spoke first."

"I never. That was song. You spoke first, and you have to pay a surfeit."

Alice picked up her books and went into her own room, closing the door; Catherine wrinkled her forehead unbeautifully over the psychology pages; Frieda returned to her studying, and Hannah began to shake the sand-glass to the time of "Inn, egg, buzz, ebb, bunn, purr."

"Bushels of mail for you!" The mail girl popped a handful of letters and papers in through a crack and was gone.

"Hannah and Frieda landed on top of the pile at once." — *Page* 173.

Hannah and Frieda landed on top of the pile at once, and Catherine had to remove them, locked in struggle, before she could get at the mail.

"Four just alike, one for each of us. A tailor's opening or a new face cream, *ça va sans dire.* One for Alice from Jackaboy — see the fine train of cars printed on the envelope! Two for you, Hannah —"

"Dad! My allowance. Glory be! Why, this is Karl's writing. It's your week, Frieda."

"I have one too. He's writing you extra because he found out that I played a little trick when I marked the calendar and gave myself one extra. He said he'd make it up to you. Didn't you get anything, Kathleen Mavourneen? Too bad!"

"Nothing but the *Courier,* and a bill from Marshman's."

Catherine ripped off the paper wrapping of the *Courier,* and glanced at the headlines, smiling over MAXINE MARRIES MONDAY at the head of one column and then, her eye catching at a neat little item at the base of another: "Owing to our crowded condition, births and deaths have been postponed till next week," she settled down to read it, line by line, taking a keen interest in the account of Mr. Graham's new store front, and the painting of the parsonage, of the meeting of the Three R's club at the Winthrops'; in the

library notes and even the advertising. When both outside pages had been carefully perused, and the "patent insides" glanced at, she recalled Alice's letter as yet unclaimed, and with it in hand tapped at the door of one of the little bedrooms.

There was no response. Turning the knob gently, she opened the door a crack and peeped in. Alice, curled up on the bed, was utterly absorbed in a book. Catherine tiptoed over to her and looked over her shoulder.

"You dreadful little hypocrite! Shutting yourself up because we were too noisy and then reading Henry James! And never an English course for a pretext!"

Alice reached vainly for the confiscated book and then sat up, yawning.

"I could n't stop. Every little while I'd have the feeling that by another minute I should know what he was driving at. This is only the first volume."

"You won't know any more in the second. Your liking for strange novels is a marvel to me anyhow. Now *The Egoist*. It makes me personally feel mean."

"I know. And *Tommy and Grizel* was written just to show me up for a potential Tommy, but there's a fascination about it. You know that paragraph in *Tommy* where Grizel struts? It

makes me feel all shivery with bliss of words, just words. And there 's a paragraph in *The House of Mirth* — Wait. I'll find it."

"No, you won't. I did n't come in here to get your views on English fiction of the last decade. I brought you a letter from your young brother."

"Jack? Give it to me, quick. Where 's a cutter? I preserve his letters as curiosities, and I would n't tear the envelope. O, Catherine, do look. Reading aloud won't give you half. Do you suppose he will ever learn to spell? And he works so hard! Is n't that patient writing?"

The two girls bent laughing, tender faces over the little ruled sheet:

"*Dear Allie:*

"It is loanlie without yow I have a pare of rabites and ther is a gray scurrle in the oke tree I wisch yow wood come hoam. I got 5100s in spelling in scool last weak Willi peters has the mums Jenni peters has the mums Effie Peters has the mums I hop you will wright to me I am wrighting very hurridly

"JOHN MOTLEY PRESCOTT

"P. S. The spelling is al my oan *J. M. P.*

"P. SS. I am not sure abot that word wright. the w makes a difrence. 1 of the rabitts is ded *J. M. P.*"

"Is n't it preposterous? And he has lessons in spelling every day of his life, out of a progressive book. He was having 'anaesthetic' and 'osculatory' and 'ambulance' and 'hitherto' when I was at home. I'm glad I was born as young as I was, in time for a few old-fashioned methods!"

"You might send him those rules of Frieda's about 'is, was, thus, yes,' and so forth. He could n't be muddled any worse and I should think almost any rule would help."

"O girls! Girls! Listen! Look!" Frieda and Hannah plunged into the room, waving open letters and shouting with laughter.

"What is it? You know I can't read German script. What is the matter?" Alice seized one child and Catherine the other, and their combined efforts secured a gasping calm in which explanation was attempted.

"Our letters are just alike!"

"They always have been!"

"Frieda's in German and mine in English."

"The villain writes them the same week and holds one."

"We never thought of comparing and we never let each other read them."

"And this time they came together and we began to read at the same time and we both laughed at the same place in the page."

"And that made us suspicious and we investigated and compared —"

"O dear, O dear!" And the two fell upon each other, wiping tears of delight from their eyes.

"What a set of monkeys you three are!" said Catherine. "I think Karl must be a perfect curiosity. I don't believe he is a bit grown up."

"Well, he is." Hannah's face sobered and she spoke in a tone of annoyance. "He's a real grown up man, is n't he, Frieda?"

"Rather! Much more of a man than that sissy Frank that Margaret Warren is so proud of. One can have a sense of humor, Catherine Smith, and still be mature!"

"Or pa-ture," murmured Alice mischievously. "He looks very fine and manly in his picture, I'm sure. How are you going to punish him for this?"

"I don't know," said Hannah, diverted from her offended dignity. "Of course, we can do the same way with our letters, but that is n't very much revenge."

"Why don't you stop writing to him altogether?" suggested Catherine. "That ought to punish him."

"He 'd never notice it," groaned Hannah.

"He does n't care half as much about us as we do about him," wailed Frieda. "We're just little girls to play with."

"What will you do when he falls in love with a big girl?"

"Claw her eyes out," answered Frieda promptly.

"Put her to sleep with poisoned candied violets," said Hannah, speaking with relish. "I always have thought that would be a most romantic way to perish. I hope lavender will be beconing to her as it is to you, Catherine."

"We'll tell her to put on a lovely lavender gown of some soft creepy stuff," agreed Frieda cheerfully, "and a great knot of real violets on her corsage!"

"Why not have her be Yale in sympathy?" suggested Alice. "Karl could throw her over on that account and send the poisoned candies to her, and then while she is dying she can write him a touching note and tell him that his foul suspicions are unfounded and her blood is not blue but crimson, proving that she is Harvard at heart. She could send him a drop!"

"Shades of Henry James! Is that the effect a half hour of him has on you?" cried Catherine, throwing up her hands in horror. "We'll have to put you on a diet of some mild realists like Mrs. Southworth or Mary J. Holmes. And speaking of literature, I have a class in it next period and it's next period now. Good-bye," and Catherine opened the door and started out, stopping short on the threshold with a joyous shout:

"Mother! Mother darling! However in the world did you happen to be here?"

Dr. Helen had come over to escort Madam Kittredge, who had decided to visit Mrs. Langdon and Miss Matty, brought to the point of doing so by a pathetic little note from Miss Matty telling of the obvious failing of Mrs. Langdon's health. The blind woman dreaded even that short railroad journey, and also wished Dr. Helen, in whose professional skill she had deep confidence, to see and prescribe for Mrs. Langdon. They had therefore made the plan quietly and accomplished the journey without letting either Catherine or the Elmknoll ladies know of their intention. Dr. Helen had left the three old friends together to have their first visit undisturbed, but, as she was obliged to return to Winsted next day, they had made her promise to spend the evening with them, bringing the four girls with her.

All afternoon Dr. Helen was the center of interest at the college. Girls came by the dozen to call. She was taken to the basket ball practice in the gymnasium, introduced to every one in the corridors, enthroned in the seat of honor in the Cozy Corner while Mademoiselle Corinne made tea for the multitude, and at last surrendered to Miss Eliot for a few minutes while the four, calling upon Priscilla and Hilda to act as maids, dressed

in their prettiest in nervous fear of keeping Thomas waiting.

Martha confided to Cook afterward that she never, never did see anything so pretty as that dinner party, and Dr. Helen was inclined to the same opinion.

Mrs. Langdon, in spite of her brusqueries of speech, preferred stately customs even on quite commonplace occasions, and to-night with those who were dearest to her on earth gathered around her table, she was queenly in bearing and in dress. Little fluttering Miss Matty wearing a soft lavender crepe which reminded the girls of the fate of Karl's conjectural fiancée (Hannah declared privately, "if he should see her, he could n't help falling in love with her, I'm positive!") went about with an uplifted look far beyond simple happiness. It was she who brought the cane which "Sue" needed in walking. It was she who quietly put aside Dr. Helen and Alice, both offering to lend an arm to beautiful Madam Kittredge, and drew her gently and lovingly out into the dining-room. Madam Kittredge had a fancy for white and was dressed to-night in a handsome white gown as regal with her snowy hair as Mrs. Langdon's black satin. The four girls following Dr. Helen's plain gray figure looked like the traditional flock of butterflies, pale green, dainty rose-dotted white, blue, and yellow.

The talk was carried on by the elders, the girls, happy and interested, listening to everything, but contributing nothing unless directly addressed. The mere fact of being "out" at dinner on another than Friday evening impressed them. Their own magnificent attire was a further quieting influence, while the food, of a wholly different order from that which the college tables knew, required close appreciative attention, all energies not otherwise engaged being fully taken up in simple admiration of the beautiful three. Dr. Helen watched them with amusement. The great gap in years between Catherine and Frieda was not so great from her point of view, and she found Catherine's eager attention to the older women's conversation quite as naïve and endearing as Frieda's furtive study of the mighty Fork Problem.

"When the oldest of you is my age," said Madam Kittredge, turning toward the girls, "you must have a reunion like this of ours, and invite the sweetest group of girl friends you can find, and pass on to them the story of our keeping faith."

"I am the oldest," answered Catherine, "so I must represent you, and that is appropriate because of Winsted, and Alice will stand for Mrs. Langdon —" Alice and Mrs. Langdon exchanged looks of satisfaction at that, "and Hannah and

Frieda are so often counted together that they can take Miss Matty's place."

"But where will we find the young girls?" wondered Hannah. "Perdita Osgood and her friends perhaps?"

"O no, indeed," cried Dr. Helen. "Perdita might possibly substitute for me, but the young girls would be Perdita's daughters!"

Hannah and Frieda murmured such a long, low Oh that every one laughed.

"School-girl friendships seldom live as long as ours," said Mrs. Langdon. "Did you not tell me, Helen, that you are not in active communication with any of your college friends except Clara Lyndesay? And yet you had warm friends."

"But I was busy and so were they. We seldom saw each other, and letters are very unsatisfactory, unless written frequently enough to keep up a lively interest in details."

"I wish," said Alice softly, "that you three would tell us what to do to keep our friendship always."

There was a little thoughtful silence. Then Madam Kittredge said brightly: "The best thing I know is to keep on loving!"

"It's pretty necessary, though, Evelyn," put in Miss Matty, "to keep on writing."

"And the most important of all," said Mrs.

Langdon decidedly, "is to use your common sense. A friendship that is all romance and hifalutin will go out like a spark or wilt like flowers and be messy. But with real congeniality to start with, and faithfulness about details of letters and gifts and such like, and a big strong thread of good sense running through all the time, to prevent misunderstandings, and to keep all parties alive to the value of friendship and its proportionate importance in life, it will take more than death to destroy it."

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

IN THE MIDST OF LIFE

THE girls lingered on after dinner, listening to the reminiscent talk of the three old friends. It presently touched upon Mrs. Langdon's wedding, and Madam Kittredge turned to Catherine, who sat between her and Dr. Helen.

"Did you ever see anything so wonderful as Sue's wedding gown, Catherine?"

"But I never saw it."

"Never saw it? Susan Devereux, have you known these girls for all this time and never shown them your wedding gown? I am surprised at you. And Matty, of course, has her bridesmaid gown here, and I suppose it never occurred to her that they would care to see it!"

"Get Martha," said Mrs. Langdon to Alice. And when Martha appeared, she was given minute directions about a certain locked drawer in the bureau in the blue room, and went off, with Alice and Hannah to help her, delightedly. Miss Matty went herself to bring her gown, Frieda accompanying her, while Catherine waited, her hand in her mother's.

They all came back together, and spread their lovely burdens reverently out for admiration.

"I don't need eyes to see them," said Madam Kittredge cheerfully. "You can't see the roses woven into that silk more perfectly than I can. Let me take the veil. I'd like to feel its roses with my finger-tips. They stand out so that I can. Did you bring down the crown of little gold roses John gave her?"

Mrs. Langdon lifted the delicate veil and laid it across Evelyn's lap. Her fingers, which shook a trifle, touched it lightly here and there, and presently caught on something.

"Sue! You never took it off! You obstinate girl! Matty, see here! Don't bother about her pink gown, children. I had one just like it, for though I was older Sue was married first, and John said that it would have been impossible to choose between Matty and me, so he was driven to put up with the bride, who was the only one in white and easier to settle on. Matty wore that gown of hers at my wedding, too, and the loveliest pink hat. But I want you to come and see what I have found. You know, Sue was the most stubborn girl in school, and even falling in love did n't soften her, except toward John. When it came to her wedding clothes, what do you think she refused to do?"

Mrs. Langdon's indulgent smile, and Miss Matty's happy one, and Madam Kittredge's look of mischief, all seemed so characteristic that Catherine, watching, felt herself in the presence of the three young girls of long ago. The others begged for the story to continue, and Evelyn went on.

"She vowed she'd wear no color but white,— not have a thread of the traditional blue, you know, and as for borrowing! Will you ever forget how fierce she was, Matty?"

"Never. And it always seemed strange, when she was so generous about lending her own things. And the old charm was pretty enough. I did think you were too bad to break it, Sue."

Madam Kittredge laughed. "She did n't break it. I did n't tell you, Matty, for fear you'd thwart me. But at the very last I told her her veil was a bit askew, and I stuck a tiny pin of my own in, that little turquoise star I used to wear, you know. So she had all three, something borrowed, something old, and something blue, in spite of herself! And that little pin is here yet. See!"

"It was not borrowed," said Mrs. Langdon. "It was given. That is why I never returned it."

"Given? Never. It's my pin, and I claim it. I only lent it to you, Sue!"

Mrs. Langdon put a strong hand on the little blue star, and drew it away. "Then it is stolen!

I refuse to return it, and I wore nothing borrowed on my wedding day, Evelyn Armstrong! You are n't victorious yet!"

The girls, watching all this with delight and wonder, suddenly noticed that Miss Matty and her pink gown were gone. Alice started up to go after her, but Dr. Helen shook her head. In a few minutes a soft swish of skirts on the stairs roused them and they turned to see the little bridesmaid of old coming down in her quaint pink gown, with her great pink hat, and even a pink flower basket on her arm.

With little cries of delight, the girls flew to meet her, all but Frieda, who slipped over to Madam Kittredge's side.

"Her cheeks are as pink as her gown," she whispered. "And her eyes are bright and she looks so shy."

"Thank you, dear," said Madam Kittredge, pressing Frieda's hand. "I like to think of her that way. That's the way I see her in my mind. It's too bad you 've no roses for your basket, Matty."

"Yes, there were none but the red ones we had on the table," said Miss Matty. "Girls, you never in your lives have seen such roses as there were at Sue's wedding. Evelyn's wedding was beautiful, but much simpler, in a city apartment.

But Sue's was here. There was no church and the Bishop came to perform the ceremony. All the country round about had been raising roses for the wedding. The walks and drives were bordered with rosebushes in bloom, and the house was filled, literally filled."

"Don't you remember how lovely those climbing ones were along the porch pillars?"

"And how John went about singing at the top, — or the bottom — of that big voice of his:

> " 'My luve is like a red, red rose
> That's newly sprung in June'?"

"Yes, indeed. I can hear him yet:

> " 'Till a' the seas gang dry, my dear,
> And the rocks melt wi' the sun.'"

While her friends talked, Mrs. Langdon sat in silence, her hand resting on the little crown of golden roses, the veil falling across her black gown. The girls, listening, wondered a little, to hear "John" so freely spoken of, since their hostess herself said nothing of him. "But they know her so perfectly, they could not make a mistake," Alice comforted her own alarm, and was presently assured, for Mrs. Langdon said:

"Sing it all through for us, Alice child. I've heard you hum the same air."

So Alice sang the sweet Scotch song, and her hearers quite lost themselves in picturing, by memory or imagination, the pretty June wedding and the joyous bridegroom, training rose vines and cutting roses, singing the while.

"He said," Mrs. Langdon smiled presently, "that even the thorns were dear to him, for they reminded him of me! And he would sing the last lines:

> "'Fare thee weel, my only luve,
> And fare thee weel awhile,
> And I will come again, my luve,
> Though it were ten thousand mile,'

when he was only going to the stable for a basket, because he said it was as much of a chance as he should ever have to say it to me! And he was right, for I followed him to places where no woman had ever been before."

"That's the way Mrs. Custer stayed by the General," said Hannah, "and that's the way I shall stay by mine. I don't see how a woman can let her husband go into danger without her."

"That is probably why so many women take up automobiling!" said Madam Kittredge mischievously. "That's the most dangerous thing most of our every-day husbands undertake. We don't all marry army officers in war time, or civil

engineers with a taste for laying out railroads in unheard-of spots."

"I think I'll marry an explorer," said Hannah meditatively, "now that the North Pole is found. I never cared about going there, but I'd just as soon explore any other sort of climate. Anyhow, whatever he does, I shall stay with him all the time, the way you and Mrs. Langdon did. That's the important point."

Madam Kittredge laughed again.

"My husband travelled more than half the time. I never went anywhere with him for ten years. It was n't lack of devotion, either, Miss Hannah."

"You brought your son up magnificently," said Dr. Helen. "I should not have suspected that he was a child with an absentee father!"

"It took me all the time of the absences to straighten the boy out after his father's pettings! But he is a fine man. He has a look of Frederick about the eyes, Matty. And he 's both a minister and a man. I'm proud of him."

"Is n't it queer to think of Mr. Kittredge being a baby!" sighed Catherine. "I feel all mixed up to-night. I don't know what year it is or anything."

"You don't know what time it is, that's certain," said Alice with a start, looking at her watch. "We have barely half an hour to get back to

college in, Mrs. Langdon. May I ask Martha to tell Thomas to come around?"

Dr. Helen stayed at Elmknoll that night, and it was well she did so, for in the morning Miss Matty, going as she often did into her hostess' room, to light her fire and close her windows, found her very ill. Dr. Helen, summoned, worked faithfully and skilfully, but in vain. By the time the sun was well up in the morning sky, Mrs. Langdon, without a return to consciousness, had died.

The days that followed were strange to the four girls. Dr. Helen remained, of course, to take active charge of the household at Elmknoll, and she deliberately chose her daughter and her three friends to assist her in every way possible.

"It is a beautiful opportunity for them to meet death and all that goes with it in a natural, sweet way, without the terrible sorrow it must often mean. Such service as I am asking of them is what women have been called upon to render since the world began, and I wish them not to shrink, as many modern young people do, from the great realities."

Miss Eliot sympathized fully, and gave the girls permission to put college duties aside until Dr. Helen should dismiss them. The hours in

the great house with its strange hush, the little attempts to comfort Miss Matty and to wait on the blind brave Madam Kittredge to whom Miss Matty clung, the many calls from neighbors and the unknown friends of Mrs. Langdon, arranging flowers, doing little errands down town and about the house, writing notes and sending telegrams, meeting trains to receive the few distant kinsfolk who came to the funeral, — all these occupations so different from those of their usual college days made the week stand out apart from all other weeks. Going back every night to the college, they felt as though they were entering a world to which they no longer really belonged, and the four of them remained quietly in No. 47, caring to see no one else, but feeling drawn to each other in a closeness which even they had never felt before, talking over the events of the day.

"John has carried her away from us again, Matty," they had heard Madam Kittredge say. "Just as he did before. And we can do nothing, but keep on loving her, as we did before."

"But, before, we could hear from her," sighed little Miss Matty sadly.

And Madam Kittredge had smiled with a wonderful sweetness. "We'll have to substitute thoughts for letters now, dear heart, but the

common sense she insisted on can still come into play!"

"Yes," Miss Matty agreed thoughtfully. "It would irritate Sue to have us despair. We know she is glad to have her long waiting for John at an end, and we all do believe that we shall be with her again. She always declared grief an indulgence. She was very stern."

"Stern with herself, but not really with others. O, Matty, how she is betrayed every day by these messages that come from all over the world,—from sorrowing people whom she has comforted."

That, after all, was the wonderful thing. The house in June with its marvel of wedding roses could not have been more fragrant than now in this dull month of March. By mail, by express, by special messenger, the flowers came. Frieda took instinctive charge of them, turning to Miss Matty for advice and help. While Madam Kittredge dictated to Hannah telegrams and letters to hundreds of Mrs. Langdon's and her husband's acquaintances, while Catherine followed her mother about, eager to help in every possible way, and Alice comforted and directed the grieving servants, Frieda decked the house with flowers.

Mrs. Langdon wore her wedding dress last, more because the girls desired it than from any idea that she would have chosen so herself. Mr. Kit-

tredge came over from Winsted and the Bishop came from farther still. The college closed for the day, and the white-gowned choir of girls sang the hymns which she had selected for her John's burial, long ago.

"It was all," Miss Eliot said afterward, "a tribute to the vitality of the secondary relations. There doubtless never was a woman who loved her husband more singly than she did. Her parents died long ago. She had no children. Except for those two girlhood friends, and for Alice, whom she has taken into her heart these last two years, none of us there could feel ourselves intimately near her. But we all loved her in our various ways for various causes, and with unquestionable sincerity. She believed that as long as she was alive, she must live to some purpose, and, all the while keeping herself reserved, she reached out and did good wherever she saw an opportunity. She regarded her money as a responsibility, and no less seriously her mind and her judgment. I have heard her say that no talent was so rare as good sense, and none was so sorely needed in the world. I should not be surprised to find that she had left money to endow a chair of Common Sense at the college."

"Ah no," said Dr. Helen, smiling. "She would never have trusted any one else to fill it! But I

confess to a frank curiosity about her will and its contents."

Such a feeling of interest was general, and when the will was made public the feeling was justified. Susan Langdon had not left the final disposition of her property to chance. She had studied the matter thoroughly, and her decisions were made with justice and kindness. To begin with, the estate proved much smaller than had been supposed. She had preferred to dispose of a large share of it while living. The distant relatives were remembered with reasonable bequests; the faithful servants pensioned as their rare quality deserved. Miss Matty was given a home at Elmknoll for life, with a liberal allowance for personal expenditures and a strictly limited one for charity. Mrs. Langdon expressed the hope that if Miss Matty wished it, Alice should make her home with her. To her friend Evelyn she left the little turquoise pin, "with any other of my personal possessions, not otherwise bestowed, which she may choose." The college received a substantial sum of money, given without conditions and outright; and the residue went to Dr. Helen and Dr. Harlow Smith to use in hospital building, in research work, or in any other such way they might wish. An infinite number of small items showed her kindly thought. A beautiful table and

a rare old rug were given to Alice's Cozy Corner; one bookcase's contents were to go to Catherine's little Public Library in Winsted; and many other small enterprises of which she had been told received encouragement and assistance in some wise way.

The long days were over. Dr. Helen had returned to Winsted, taking Madam Kittredge with her, and little Miss Matty also, on a visit. Alice was waiting her mother's approval before packing up to go to Elmknoll for the rest of the year, and Hilda was joyously preparing to move into Alice's place in 47 before the spring vacation. The four sat together on the couch, a little sad at the partings soon to come.

"I never used to think of death or of old age, before, as though they could ever happen to me or to any of my friends," said Hannah, "but I feel now as though about next week I might expect to begin to lose my faculties, and as if you all might die before the vacation 's over. My hair feels white."

"It's not," Frieda assured her. "Because if it were I could see it in the dark, and all I can see is a blur for your head and a blaze for Catherine's."

Catherine's hand from a convenient position tickled Frieda's chin.

"Without my hair to joke about, how could you children ever learn witticism?" she asked lazily.

"The changes in my life have really begun," said Alice, ignoring the intermediate remarks and returning to Hannah's theme. "It's nice to feel sure of my living, but I did rather count on four terms more in this dear old Hall. And I suppose I can't go home this summer. But Miss Matty's such a dear. I really, truly love her and shall like to live with her. You girls must come over all the time, though."

"We will," answered Catherine. "And this summer I shall see you no end. Father promised at Christmas that he would buy a machine in the spring, you know, and I'll learn to run it myself and drive over here every day or two."

"How shocked Mrs. Langdon would have been at such an idea!" put in Hannah. "But that reminds me that Mother wrote to-day that Aunt Clara had invited her to help chaperone Karl and Frieda and me on a two-days' trip spring vacation, if the weather's good. Won't it be fun? I can't stay solemn very long. It doesn't seem natural."

"And it isn't sensible," said Catherine. "My book of *Singing Leaves*, you know, says:

> " 'And if your heart be sudden light
> And yet you know not why,
> I counsel you, hold fast the joy,
> Let pride of woe go by.'

"It's thoroughly good counsel too. We've learned a lot this last week, but there's no use brooding over it. The thing I see dimly, and yet surely, is what people really mean when they speak of youth as the happiest part of life. It used to make me angry. If life was n't going to grow better and sweeter as I went on, I felt like stopping where I was. But I do see now, that while it does grow richer it grows *graver*. That's what they mean. One is n't merry when one has lived long enough to know sorrow and sympathy and anxiety and final parting, and every year you live you make fresh connections through which suffering may come to you. So far, we've had only happiness through each other, but as the years go by, every sorrow that comes to one of us must touch the other three. And yet we would n't have it different."

In the quiet darkness they drew even a little closer to each other, and no one spoke for some time till Alice broke the silence by saying with a deep breath:

"And I used to think college was just books, or at the most just books and fun! And it really is, if you take it so, like anything else, Life, with a capital letter — *Life!*"

COLLEGE CALENDAR

College exercises begin at 8:30 A. M.	April 9
Promenade	April 17
Commencement	June 9

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

EVERGREENS

" 'How I wish we all were geese,
All were geese.
How I wish we all were geese
Night and morn.
For they live and die in peace
Till the hour of their decease,
Eating corn!' "

"Hush up, Hannah. You mix me. '*Eheu fugaces, postume,— postume.*' O yes, '*labuntur anni*'—"

" 'How I wish we all were geese!' You poor afflicted childling! Do you mean to say that Flavia E. has given the prep class that terrible ode to learn?"

Hannah, still humming the queer little Irish air, reached over the top of the broad table desk which she shared with Frieda, for the book over which Frieda's frowning face was bent.

"That's what you get for not learning Latin in the Old Country and having it to do over here. Professor Martin is a jewel and a star, but I had my early training under Flavia and I know all about her. She actually likes that ode! Thinks it is a handy thing to have stored away in your head

to recite in time of trouble, if your husband fails in business or the house should catch on fire, I suppose! How does it go? '*Eheu fugaces*'— I keep trying to sing it to that 'all were geese' tune, and it does n't work. If you could set it to an air, it would be easier."

"What, for instance?" asked Frieda bitterly, taking the book back again. "Suwanee River? Or Hello Central, give me Heaven?"

"I don't just know," pondered Hannah seriously. "It would have to be slow to give you time to think what was coming next,— sort of funeral march tune, you know. I tell you, why not that chant they sing in chapel every evening?"

Alice, rushing in to borrow a theme-pad half an hour later, found the two marching gravely up and down the room holding open copies of Horace and chanting the Latin words with a most ecclesiastical intonation. Her own haste prevented her lingering to investigate, and when in the course of the next class the scene and its meaning flashed across her mind, she smiled over it. "It might seem sacrilegious to some people, but if ever anything was done less in a spirit of flippancy than that, I've yet to see it. All they were after was to learn that ode. I've heard half a dozen preps despairing over it all day. I must see Catherine next hour about those Prom cards. It's worse

than Permutations and Combinations to work them all out. I'm glad I've none of my own."

The Prom was coming off next day, and every one was in a whirl of preparation, telephoning the express office and dilatory dressmakers about new gowns slow to arrive, sending out old ones to be pressed, completing luncheon party plans and incidentally tucking in classes where convenient. Every sunny window was in demand for hair drying, and every corridor corner was a gathering place for anxious hostesses, striving to fill out their guests' dance cards without conflict. Miss Eliot, Mademoiselle Corinne, the jolly little Ph.D., who was head of the Mathematics department, every instructor and laboratory assistant on the whole teaching force responded to the call of festivity and required little in the way of work, expecting less.

Only the unfortunate Miss Eastman, doomed ever to be a killjoy and spoilsport, consistently bore down upon her pupils that morning as though Proms were naught, and the dead languages alone had substance. Frieda, to whom Latin was a stumbling-block, a "condition" dire disgrace, and Miss Eastman an object of terror, held her mind sternly to the ode all the way over from Main amid such fascinating chatter as: "Give me the 8th, can you? I found I'd already promised

Clarinda the 10th." "I want early supper dances." "Is n't it a pity? My man can't come, and I had his card all filled out with dandy girls." "Helen Gray's two men both accepted, and she asked two to make sure of one. She's nearly crazy." "We're going to canoe in the morning instead of the glee club concert. Fred hates music, but he's a crack paddler."

Frieda, unmoved, intent on Horace and the chant, passed through the groups and into the class room, taking her seat with an absent gaze which irritated Miss Eastman. Over the open transom floated a shrill voice:

"Frieda Lange said she'd bet anything that Flavia'd give a written in Latin. On the day before the Prom! The monster has n't a shred of the milk of human kindness in her whole cranium. Catch Miss Eliot —"

The voice trailed away into silence, but the preps, seated in anxious array before the monster, felt no impulse to smile, each one privately rejoicing that she was not freshman Frieda.

"Miss Lange, you may recite the ode I assigned for memorizing."

Frieda, her eyes fixed on a small end of hair projecting from Miss Eastman's accurate Psyche knot, rose, clasped her hands in front of her and broke into stately song.

The Four-Ordained were as one man in resenting injustice done to one of the four.

Frieda in her deep woe found sympathy and indignation at her call. Catherine had not quite recovered from the resentment roused by Miss Eastman at their first meeting. Alice felt remorseful to think she had not suggested to the innocent Frieda that some minds might look upon the appropriation of a church chant to purely secular ends as an irreligious performance, Miss Eastman's Philippic, delivered on the spot before a scared and shrinking audience, having made the most of that phase of the subject. Hannah, between outbursts of mirth at the mere idea of the astounded moment following Frieda's utterance and preceding Miss Eastman's, abused herself roundly for having invented the device,— winding up, however, with a triumphant: "It did make you learn it, anyhow, and what would n't I have given to be there and hear you sail out on it! She's a beast and a pill, and a double-dyed horror, and don't you worry one more minute. You did n't mean to be bad. You meant to be extra good. That's where the moral comes in. Now brighten up and think about to-morrow night and dancing with Algernon!"

But even that gay prospect could not shake Frieda's heavy gloom. Sombre rage and dis-

couragement were written on her brow, and Catherine and Alice woke to the realization that they must do something promptly.

"I wish," said Alice, "that you two would get a horse and drive out after evergreens for the decorating committee. They have n't nearly enough and are almost distracted. It would be a deed of charity to help Pris out, and you 'd have a nice drive into the bargain."

Hannah did a clog to indicate her satisfaction, and raced away to make the necessary arrangements, while Frieda, with a manner which seemed to suggest that though life was not worth living one might as well go driving as stay at home, "condescended" the stairs and waited drearily on the carriage block till Hannah, a tall tree-trimming implement, and a "ladies' horse" from the livery had gathered around her.

"Now just cut out the dismals, Fräulein Frieda," said Hannah decisively, as she climbed into the decrepit buggy. "Blues are silly, and you know it, and you 've got to drive this spirited steed named Lady, and I won't risk my life with anybody in such a suicidic state of mind as yours, I can tell you."

Frieda took the reins and uttered a strange German shout. The horse plunged forward for a few lengths and stopped suddenly.

"Gidap!" urged Hannah. "He does n't understand German, and it will break the buggy if we have any more such jerks as that. Clk! Clk! Slap the lines. That's the way to drive this sort of animal."

"Drive him yourself, then," snapped Frieda with justifiable wrath. "You said you wanted me to. Perhaps you'd better get Hilda. I don't care much about going anyway."

Hannah bit her tongue with annoyance. She had handled this prickly maiden often enough to know her peculiarities, but over and over again she found herself chattering along and saying exactly the kind of thing to irritate Frieda. Now she was almost in despair, and sat speechless, holding her tongue literally between her teeth, for fear it should do further mischief.

Suddenly Miss Eastman appeared, stalking along the path, reading as she walked. There was a mud puddle on the crossing and she was approaching it. Frieda flopped the reins and uttered once more the German cry. The startled horse leaped into the air, came down in the puddle, splashing Miss Eastman's austere tailored garments, and then halted once more.

Frieda leaned out of the buggy.

"I beg your pardon," she said most solemnly, and then turning to the horse, she clucked as

Hannah had done and drove off at an amiable trot.

"Now I have begged her pardon," she said cheerfully. "She said I must before I came to class again, and I did not want to flunk the whole course; but I could not beg her pardon when I had done nothing to be ashamed of. Now I have and it is all arranged."

Hannah's speechlessness was involuntary now. She had no words to express her mingled emotions, and no facilities for such expression anyhow, for with Lady's lunge Hannah's teeth had almost met through her tongue. When she contrived to make this misfortune plain to Frieda, that astonishing child gave way to much penitence and sympathy; and by the time Lady had made her way out of the town and into the country good humor was fully established in the hearts of her passengers. Frieda cast an appraising eye over the pretty country landscape now and then between her attentions to the horse.

"Where we shall find evergreens, I do not see. This land is bare of trees, and what trees there are are unleafful."

"You can't expect leaves to be out in April. They're budded now, anyhow. I don't know where to go for evergreens myself. I forgot to ask anybody, but there must be some somewhere."

"You should see the pines at Grünewald."

"I have. Don't you remember? Karl took us there. They have pink trunks and you can buy beer everywhere. We have lots of pine woods in this country and used to have more, but they have been cut down for lumber."

"Yes. And no new ones have been planted. The Lord will punish the Americans some day for their wastefulness. Do they think they own the earth? They have but a lifetime's lease, and they have no right to rob their ancestors."

"Fine! I'll vote for you for Tree Day orator. Go on and get off that awful picture Prexy drew of the country without shade or water or fuel when he scolded us for building picnic fires and not putting them out. It gave me a terrible scared feeling the way it does when I think about monsters having been around here with feet as big as our parlor at home, squshing down ferns into coal and all that. I do love science. I'm going in for it next year."

"Next year I may not be in America. I know my parents have consented, but when I get home across the great ocean for the vacation, it may not be easy to leave home again. Germany is my home and I am the *einziges* child of my beloved father and mother, and though they do not write it, I think they are lonely. I have learned enough.

I believe, Hannah, when I go home, I stay. I wish no more Latin. And you shall come to visit, all of you and Hilda. Americans are always in Europe."

Hannah's blithe face was clouded now. "I just dread living," she burst out suddenly. "There are such a lot of good-byes in it. Nobody ever stays put, or if they do, it's where you are n't."

Frieda turned mischief-glancing eyes upon her.

"Now, just cut out the dismals, Hannah Eldred. Blues are silly and you know it. Whoa! Stop! Ssss! *Halt!* What in the world is the matter with the crazy animal?"

"This tree-trimmer fell over and punched her when I jumped at you to spat you for quoting my own words. No wonder she ran! Never mind. Don't stop her. She'll give out soon, and maybe we'll come to some evergreens if she keeps on. Did you ever see such ridiculous legs?"

Lady tore down the road, trying her best to get away from the rattling buggy with the strange occupants, who shouted unwonted tongues at her, and stabbed her unexpectedly. Frieda braced her feet against the dashboard and hung on for dear life, while Hannah, at her side, shouted joyous ejaculations over the general hubbub.

At a corner, Lady turned and dashed down

a lane, bringing up at the end of it with a jerk that threw the girls into each other's laps.

"My dear," whispered Hannah in astonishment. "We've bumped right into a graveyard. A little private cemetery!"

Frieda caught up the tree-trimmer and scrambled out.

"What are you going to do? O Frieda, not those evergreens. It seems almost wicked to take them."

"I don't see why. We've got to have them and these are the first we've seen. If we don't get them, we'll have to pay the livery bill ourselves, and I'm hard up and of course you are."

"O dear!" Hannah climbed slowly down and stood watching Frieda hitch Lady to a black painted post in front of the gate, a superfluous proceeding apparently, for Lady was meekly grazing, having broken her check rein in one of her violent starts.

"We can't drive the creature any farther. If we get her home safely it will be wondrous. And we must have evergreens. Here are evergreens. It is simple. I have no fear about them. Are you superstitious, Hannah?" Frieda finished her strap-tying and opened the graveyard gate. Hannah followed slowly.

"Not exactly superstitious, but it seems like

robbing — your ancestors!" she giggled nervously. "But I guess we've got to. Let's cut fast, Frieda. You snip them off and I'll pack them into the carriage."

They worked busily and silently, Frieda carefully selecting branches which would not be missed, doing her work with swiftness and precision, while Hannah gathered the stiff boughs into her arms and laboriously stowed them away under the seat, till the rear of the buggy was very festive in appearance. Between trips she stole curious glances at the white stones. It was set in the midst of open fields, this little cemetery, hedged with arbor vitæ and further enclosed by a solid row of spruce trees. The twenty or more graves were decently tended, and Hannah soon found herself bending to read the inscriptions and examine the floral offerings. On one grave stood a two-quart Mason jar, inverted, with shiny cabinet photographs of the deceased in her wedding dress, standing with her hand on the back of a chair in which sat her husband, his hands awkwardly spread on his knees, and a painful smile on his face. On other graves stiff little bouquets of withered geranium blossoms testified to a remembrance, prevented doubtless by long distance from frequent expression. One little grave showed a pitiful little Christmas tree hung with a child's

toys, rusted by snows and rains, a wax image washed out of recognition, and two red candles. On the next stone Hannah read in German lettering: *Heinrich Conried geb. Helmstedt, Deutschland, gest.* 1897. *Ruhet im Herrn.* The pathos of the exile suggested by the use of the mother tongue so far from the place of birth struck Hannah and she stood pensively studying the mossy letters, till Frieda called sharply that it was time to start back and she could not carry all the branches alone. Hannah turned quickly, stubbed her toe against a stone in the next lot and fell to the ground beside it. Instead of rising she began to laugh hysterically and Frieda, scolding but alarmed, hastened to her.

"One does not laugh in graveyards. Have you hurt your ankle?"

"No, oh no. But I just saw that. I did n't mean to laugh. I was feeling sad a minute ago. Look! If you don't think it's funny, I'll — I'll drive Lady all the way home!"

Frieda stooped and looked. In a rusty wire frame a pillow of yellowed everlasting flowers was what she saw.

"What's funny?" she asked scornfully.

"The words. Read them. In immortelles. *Little F-i-e-n-d Elsie!* O me, O me!"

And lying on the sodden ground Hannah laughed

till she choked and laughed again. Frieda, unable to resist the funny spelling and Hannah's funnier merriment, laughed too, and the still place rang with unwonted sounds till, with a sudden sense of alarm, they gathered up the last twigs hurriedly, shut the gate behind them, and turned Lady's head homeward.

The drive to town was varied only by Lady's beginning at one point to back down hill, having in an attempt to look over her shoulder entangled her lower jaw in the harness. That, with the breaking of the whip on her unresponsive hide, and occasional clutchings after boughs which would fall out over the wheels, saved the long homeward journey from monotony, and at supper-time the girls drove up to the college in triumph, to be received with open arms by Priscilla, chairman of the decorating committee.

"You were doves to go out and get it. The gym swallows up everything we put in it. A whole forest would n't make much impression, but we can stick this around in the places where our paper trimmings ran out. And by the way, Hannah, when I ordered the horse for you, I had it charged to you two. That liveryman is a perfect grouch and he won't let me have anything more on my bill till I pay for the horse we had on that last bacon bat, and he flatly refused to charge

it to the committee, so I gave him both your names very grandly. The Association will pay, of course, so don't be scared if he sends a lawyer out to collect. Coming, Peggy. Send Helen or somebody to help me cart in this greenery."

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

CONSTABLES AND CUPID

THE day of the Prom Catherine spent in uneasy excitement. She had a secret: a secret which must be kept till evening or till very late afternoon at any rate, and above all must be kept from her roommates.

Alice had decided not to attend the Prom, so soon after Mrs. Langdon's death. She would stay at home with Miss Matty that evening, but would come over to the concert, of course, next morning. She led the "fourths" in the Glee Club and could not be spared. Then she would see the boys and join the party at lunch. Tom Davis had sent regrets as he had been rather expected to do, and the numbers remained evenly balanced. But a week before the Prom, when all the plans were practically completed, Catherine received a shattering letter from Max Penfield, declaring it an impossibility for him to get over from Madison.

"It seems such a pity," she sighed to herself. "Archie will be out here all the way from New Haven, though, of course, not just for this occasion. I do feel as though Max might have come if he

had wanted to very much. There's probably something going on up there that he doesn't want to miss. And I suppose the syndicate idea doesn't appeal to him particularly. We'll have one girl too many, now, and when Alice comes to luncheon, two girls too many, and you always feel awkward. 'Extra lady ten cents!'" and Catherine's frown yielded to a small smile at the memory of that phrase on a playbill in Winsted. She had been addressing her mother's photograph on her desk, since there was no one in the room. Suddenly an inspiration came to her. She sat pondering, tapping her teeth with a pencil in a way Alice abhorred, and presently began writing very rapidly. After a page or two had been covered and tossed back to make room for more, she stopped and considered again, studying a small calendar earnestly.

"There won't be time. There's hardly time as it is. I'll go and ask Miss Eliot, and let it go at that. Mother will approve if she does."

Folding the sheets already written, and putting them carefully away in a drawer for later sending, she hastened off to Miss Eliot's room for a consultation with that infallible and always interested adviser.

The result was the secret. But secrets are not told ahead of time, and this one was not to

be divulged till early evening or very late afternoon of Prom Day. The Winsted boys came down on a mid-afternoon train, and their hostesses entertained them by turns, dutifully showing them the buildings and campus, in which Algernon proceeded to take a real instead of a pretended interest, thereby quite changing the character of that proverbially perfunctory operation.

"I have n't the least idea why it is called Morris Hall," vowed Hannah. "And the cost of the chapel I've entirely forgotten. *Is* that vine Ampelopsis Whatyoucallit? I don't see how you can tell without the leaves. We just call them all ivies, the way we lump the evergreens as pines. I do know hemlocks. They grow in the Path, you know. Let's wait for Hilda. She must show you through the museum. The skeletons make me ill, and there's a horrible antediluvian flood woman, with her hair and finger nails on, that frightens me to think about. Here they come! Hilda dear, I've been telling Algernon you'd show him the museum till Catherine comes. Frieda would play some kind of a trick on him, I'm afraid; and I promised Miss Pidgin I'd bring Archie to call on her. She has a cousin who went to Yale once and she thinks they may know each other, and she's too fat to dance, so this was the only opportunity."

On one pretext and another, Catherine contrived to stay in her room, or hover near the office where telegrams and telephone messages were received.

"I feel it in my bones that Max won't come," she vouchsafed to the others when they begged her to join them, "and I want to get his message the minute it comes, because it will mean a lot of rearranging. I filled his card with good dancers, you know, and they won't like it. There's a book about the college you might have crammed up on, if you'd only thought. Don't take Algernon up the hill because one of his special hobbies is geology and you never could get him by that bare place where the rocks show through! If you really get desperate, take him over to the library and turn him loose with Miss Spencer. I was saving that for to-morrow in that awful gap between luncheon and train time, when we'll all be so tired. Do what you can, but I don't dare leave off watching for the missing man."

She felt guilty saying it, because fibbing was not at all in her line, but it was partly true, and a surprise planned and carried almost but not quite to completion is very flat. There was no message and no arrival. The boys went off to dinner at the hotel and to dress, and the girls snatched food between excited last conferences

on dance cards, concert plans and clothes. The dining-room buzzed more than usual, and a cross section of the conversation at any moment would have been sure to show such elements as:

"Helen, your man is fine looking, and *so* intellectual. He asked me which of my courses I found most absorbing!"

"I've given two people the 8th, and I don't know how to fix it, so I think I'll cut them both and dance with Peter. He's lots nicer than I remembered. I had n't seen him since we used to slide down hill together perfect ages ago."

"Stanley sent pink roses and my dress is cedar, a perfectly impossible shade. I told him when he wrote and asked, and he took cedar to be green! Dy-the Allen's brother gave her a fog-horn to wear with her London smoke street dress two years ago. O, is that you, Hilda? Was the mummy lady a friend of his? Hannah told me how she put him off on you."

"I'm sure he will dance divinely, but I have n't heard him say a word but 'Quite so,' since four o'clock. I've been taking care of him for Banksy."

"Sibyl's gown has n't come yet. She told the express office she would have them arrested. But that would n't do any good after it was all over."

"Effie, may I borrow your suède slippers? I can't wear patent leathers since I hurt my foot."

"I saw the orchestra arriving with their instruments, all German and smelling of tobacco to beat the band — or the Dutch, whichever you'd rather!"

"Can't stop for dessert. I've got forty-'leven things to see to, and Arthur said he'd come out early. There are four men in his room at the hotel and they drew lots to see who should dress first and get out to make room for the others."

Hilda had been hooked into her shimmery pale blue silk, with the panels which made her even slimmer and slighter in appearance, and the cunning little train at which she could not help casting affectionate glances over her shoulder. Frieda was wielding a glove buttoner on the long gloves sent from home, which reached quite to her short pink sleeves. Hannah was working her shining slippers on over Christmas gift stockings embroidered exquisitely by Frieda. Catherine, lovely in "the sort of filmy white heroines wear, only less white than their marble shoulders," as Hannah admiringly declared, sat, ready, pretending to read Wordsworth's *Sonnets*, quite unconscious of the fact that the book was upside-down, when Genevieve thumped on the door.

Catherine sprang to answer, Wordsworth falling under the couch to lie there till sweeping day.

"Only flowers!" She came disappointedly back with a vast box.

"*Only* flowers! I hope you did n't expect the boys to be ushered up here, or to send us 'diamond tiarrhoeas' like your *Joseph Vance*. O girls, are n't they lovely?"

Hilda had opened the box while she chattered and Frieda plunged her gloved hands into the soft papers and brought up the cool beautiful flowers, letting a small shower of narrow white cards fall as she did so.

"Violets for you, of course, Catherine. And the pink roses, Killarneys, are n't they? for me. Hannah, it's lucky you decided on white, for these red Richmonds will look best with that. That leaves the chrysanthemums for you, Hilda. They are bigger than you are, but that does n't matter. I wonder what they sent Alice."

Hannah had gathered up the cards and read them over.

"Mr. Algernon Swinburne, Mr. Archibald Bradly, Mr. Bertram D. Wyman. Is n't it queer about Max? It was asking a good deal of three boys to provide flowers for five girls! Come!"

"Hannah and Frieda, will you come with me, please?"

Miss Eliot stood in the doorway, and Hannah and Frieda, bewildered, obeyed her, leaving

Catherine and Hilda, quite as much puzzled, behind.

"You go on down, Hilda, and meet the boys when they come. Here's Genevieve with the cards now. I can't come for a minute, but the others will as soon as Miss Eliot is through with them. I do wonder what it can be. She looked so very grave. You don't suppose it can be bad news, do you?"

"O, I hope not. And do come down as soon as ever you can, Catherine. I feel so queer with three strange boys on my hands. I don't see why you can't come now. You're all ready."

"I'll come in fifteen minutes. I know it looks silly, but I have a little secret which is going to prove a fizzle, I fancy. Go on, dearie. You are quite big enough to take care of them all, 'tall Bert and solemn Al*ger*non, and Archie with golden hair!'"

Restless, Catherine paced up and down the room, vexed with the universe.

"Why did n't he telegraph? Why does n't he come? What did Miss Eliot want? How perfectly flat it all is!" she thought as she waited. A knock at the door and a maid appeared.

"Miss Eliot wants you should come down to her office immediate, Miss Smith."

Her heart thumping furiously, visions of horrible

news from some home, her own or Hannah's or Frieda's, of train wrecks and murders, involving every one dear to any of them, flying through her mind, she ran through the corridors, and down the stairs to Miss Eliot's door.

At the same moment a broad-shouldered young man, one among many young men, all in evening attire, was arriving at the main entrance. He handed his card to Genevieve and asked for Miss Catherine Smith. Genevieve, who frankly enjoyed this festive occasion, looked him over interestedly, inwardly deciding him to be "a man, and the rest is mostly kids," then answered cheerfully:

"Miss Smith ain't in her room. I'll tell her when she's through. You can set down and wait."

The young man seemed rather nonplussed by this. "Are Miss Eldred and Miss Lange in, do you know?" he asked after an instant's hesitation.

"Nope. They're busy just the way Miss Smith is. They're in Miss Eliot's room with two men. Somethin's up, I don't know what. You'll just have to wait. Unless you want to see their roommate? That's her, over there in blue with the big white flowers and three fellers talking to her."

"She seems fairly occupied, too. No, I think I'll wait. Can you give me a seat a little out of this?"

Genevieve considered, then led the way down the

hall to an oak bench. The young man, not altogether charmed with his situation, tipped the maid and seated himself to wait. Girls were floating through the halls and up and down stairs, though no one came quite into his little backwater. Through a corridor window hygienically open a crack, just behind his neck, he could hear the orchestra tuning over at the gymnasium.

"The cat in the strange garret is n't in it with me," he pondered. "The guest of a girl I've never laid eyes on, and seem likely never to behold! If those wretched *Kinder* should catch sight of me sitting here like a piece of driftwood, they would never let me hear the last of it. I wonder what is up? And who the two men are? It 's a rum state of affairs however you look at it, and I'm not at all sure I'm going to sit around here indefinitely!"

A door opened near him and a girl in white with a most wonderful glory of hair came flying by him.

"By Jove! She's a beauty. O, I say, Miss Smith! Wait a bit. Were you looking for me?"

Catherine stopped short. In her haste she had not noticed the man sitting on the "anxious bench" outside Miss Eliot's office door.

"For you? O, Herr Karl! You really came? I had forgotten all about you. We're in such trouble!"

"Can I be of service?" The situation might still be "rum," but Karl Von Arndtheim had no thought now of escaping. A girl like that for his hostess, even if she had forgotten him, was not to be given up. And in trouble! He was sure those eyes were lovelier in their distress than they could be in any other state.

"I was going to get President MacArthur. And he's receiving. It will be terribly conspicuous. With Miss Eliot already absent. O dear! But we must have a man to deal with them. They are positively insulting."

"Who? Where?"

"Those men in there. Constables! They came to arrest Hannah and Frieda with warrants, real warrants. That's the trouble. And Miss Eliot can't make them go. They've been drinking."

"Tell me, clearly, all about it. If Hannah and Frieda are involved, I have a right to know. Sit down here. There! Don't tremble. What did the *Kinder* do to get themselves arrested?"

Catherine, worn out and quivering, dropped down on the bench and looked up into the kind blue eyes. Then a little laugh broke over her face.

"They — they — robbed a graveyard!"

"*Du lieber* —! What did they rob it of? And why?"

"Of evergreens for decorations for this party.

They never dreamed they should n't. And this man followed them and got their names from the liveryman, who did n't like them anyway, had a grudge against them for interfering when he was flirting with a little prep, and he and the constable came out here to-night to arrest them, and Miss Eliot is trying to keep it quiet, because if it should get into the papers it would be terrible. Simply terrible! And they just stand there and insist on taking the girls off to jail or having a lot of money paid at once. I'm sure they've been drinking. And I thought I'd slip out and get Prexy, because it was so dreadful. Miss Eliot sent for me, because she could n't quite make out about it, and Frieda was so frightened and Hannah so angry they could n't tell it straight. Frieda thinks she is the one to blame and that if Hannah is hanged it will be all her fault."

Karl had listened keenly to every point of Catherine's excited story.

"That's the room? Well, we'll try a bluff. The fellows are bullies, of course. And a woman is powerless when she wants to keep a thing out of the papers. I'll see what I can do. Don't worry. We'll get them out all right. And by the way, you might as well make out my dance card over again. We're missing the first and I want all but two with you. I'll give each of the

Kinder a whirl, but the rest of the evening I shall claim you."

"O, do go and save them, and I'll do anything you say! Only hurry."

Karl rapped authoritatively on Miss Eliot's door and entered without waiting for a response.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Eliot," he said. "My name is Von Arndtheim, an attorney from Chicago. I represent Miss Lange and Miss Eldred in this case —" A businesslike nod to each of the astonished girls, and he turned once more to Miss Eliot.

"I must ask you to take the young ladies away and let me see these gentlemen alone."

Miss Eliot rose and held out her hand to Hannah. One of the men who had been standing in sullen silence stepped forward.

"No, you don't. These here girls are under arrest. And they don't go out o' this room till we say the word."

Karl confronted him, fixing him with a determined gaze, which, however, was perhaps less effective than his quite six feet of height and his easily conjectural muscle.

"If you know what's good for you, you'll keep quiet," he said in what he described to Catherine afterward as a "soul-curdling virtuous hero voice." The half-drunken fellow mumbled something, but

feeling uncertain of his ground at this unexpected turn, dropped back a little, and Miss Eliot and the girls made a successful exit, leaving the stage to Karl.

"It was all improvising," he explained jovially afterward. "I had n't a notion of the law or how much right I had or what their warrant amounted to. But I did know I was in good training and they were n't, and after sitting like a fool there on that bench with about a million girls glancing at me and wondering what I was there for, this was a cinch! I just lit into them and met their threats of publicity with counter threats of punching them to a jelly. I called their bluff about the fake warrants and suggested that the real sheriff might be looking for them with real ones. It really was too easy. I expected either to have to fight or to pay out all the money I had with me, and work my way back to Cambridge. I dropped a word or two about Mr. Eldred's political influence in Chicago! The only business he ever has there is to meet Hannah on her way home from college. I almost told them Professor Lange was second cousin to Uncle Joe Cannon, but I did n't have time. They were sick of their job and worried by the time I came in. That Miss Eliot is n't a pleasant opposing party!"

"Indeed she is n't!" Catherine responded. "The

creatures counted on seeing the girls alone. They came sneaking around to the east door and rang there, thinking they could get Frieda and Hannah alone, and in a hurry to go to the party, and scare them into promising money. But it happened to be Teresa that opened the door, and she had sense enough not to call the girls. She went for Miss Eliot instead, and Miss Eliot brought the girls down to find out the facts. She thought the warrants were real enough."

"Maybe they were! I'm not up in warrants. Never saw one in my life. But if that fellow was a real officer, it's not much to the credit of the citizens who leave him in office. A well-aimed egg would rout him. O, I say, that was a horribly short dance. They ought to give us an encore."

Catherine folded her fan sticks neatly together, while Karl spatted applause to bring about the encore.

"I was thinking," she remarked presently, "that a good way to catch a blackmailer was to set another on him. It was that bargain you made about the dances that suggested the idea."

"That's as it may be," Karl replied briskly. "But you've no defender, and you'll have to pay to the uttermost two-step. *Die Kinder* said they'd fix it. Pretty good lot, those little sisters. Ah! There's the music."

Hannah and Frieda across the room met for a minute.

"I've just introduced Bert to Helen Gray. Did you get Archie and Priscilla together? And Hilda has Algernon. Frieda Lange, do you know where you're at, this evening?"

"I have n't got it figured out yet. Of course, she invited him instead of Max. Hilda said she had a secret. And Genevieve came around a few minutes ago with his telegram saying he was coming. It came up with the flowers and was n't delivered. But what I can't quite make out is how she ever came to do it?"

"To surprise us, I suppose. Miss Eliot and her mother knew about it. She must have been astonished when she saw him. She has always thought of him as a mere youngster, you know, and has n't been any more interested in him than in Jonathan Edwards,— if as much."

"Well, it was a surprise all around. Don't they look superb together? Bert had the last one with her, and Karl allowed it to him, quite grandly, said each of the Winsted boys might have one! I have to go. There's Effie Hiscomb's brother waiting for me, and looking like a lost rabbit."

"Good-bye." And as Hannah stood alone watching the pretty gliding dancers, free for the

moment, herself, because both of Helen Gray's men had failed to come, she shook her brown head a little sadly.

"It's good-bye to lots of things somehow. It's the kind of thing you read about. And nothing will be quite the same again, though ever and ever so much nicer."

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

MISS MATTY ASSISTING

Prom Saturday was almost over. Algernon had proved himself the night before an unexpectedly good dancer, and his enthusiastic applause at the morning concert had gone far to atone for his unholy desire for information. It was with sincere regret that the girls allowed him to take the noon train back to Winsted, but his Library was on his mind, and Saturday his busiest day. As he finished shaking hands all around, he drew his note-book from his pocket, to peruse on the way to the station the valuable suggestions which had come to him in an hour at the college library.

The luncheon, in spite of the numerical superiority of the ladies, went off brilliantly. Mademoiselle Corinne was delightful, Margaret and Frank for the time rose above their absorbed interest in each other, and Karl and Bert kept the gayety of the party at concert pitch. Archie, who had fallen a victim for the moment to Hilda's attractiveness, was reluctant to leave, and the whole group escorted him to the station.

From there at Alice's invitation, all, except Margaret and Frank, who declared themselves

"engaged," an announcement received with merry acquiescence, agreed to call upon Miss Matty at Elmknoll.

Hannah and Frieda claimed Karl, Bert found himself turned over to Hilda and Alice, while Catherine fell back with Mademoiselle Corinne.

"Tired, *chérie?*" The French girl rested her slim pointed fingers on Catherine's hand as she drew her arm through hers.

Catherine shook her head a little.

"I don't think so. It has all gone off well, has n't it? I wish Mother were here."

They walked on in silence. Then Mademoiselle Corinne spoke again.

"It was good to hear of your Aunt Clara from Mr. Karl, was n't it? She writes so seldom, and so unsatisfactorily when she does write."

"Yes. He admires her as much as every one else does. He sees her often, too."

"He tells me she wanted him to go over to Winsted before returning. She is anxious for him to take up medicine as a profession and thought your father's advice would be valuable."

Catherine allowed herself to stare at Karl's broad shoulders as she listened. Hannah on one side, Frieda on the other, both chattering to him at once. What a good big brotherly sort he was!

Bert turned suddenly.

"O, I say, Catherine, I forgot to tell you Elsmere's latest. He and Peggy Kittredge and Perdita Osgood,— Peter was sick and lost sight of Perdita for a day or two — set up housekeeping in the church steeple!"

"Impossible!" Catherine's interest was genuine, and Alice and Hilda possessed themselves of Mademoiselle Corinne presently as the story went on.

"Got the key easily enough. It's always hanging in Mr. Kittredge's study and Margaret could take it without trouble. There's a little square room up there, and they furnished it. Took them days, I fancy. They toted everything up a steep ladder, — a wonder they did n't fall and break their necks! — three little chairs from the infant room, the collection plates, a cushion from a short pew for a bed, two or three picture books from the Sunday School library, and even a framed picture of Daniel in the lions' den.

"The things were gone over Sunday, and every one was mystified. Mr. Kittredge said the sneak thief showed his sense in not waiting till after a collection had been taken to steal the plates! No matter how cheaply he held his time, it would n't have paid him to wait!"

"When did they find out?"

"Not till Wednesday night, actually. The children must have been playing up there several

times. The bell-rope hurt the girls' æsthetic sense, dangling down in the middle of their little room that way, so Elsmere cut it off — he carries a pocket knife as big as a dirk — and when the janitor went to ring the prayer-meeting bell, there lay the rope on the floor, neatly sawed off. He climbed up to investigate and found the room all nicely furnished. Remains of a lunch, too! And a doll! And the vase of chrysanthemums from Sunday service on the table, one of those silly little stands with chains hanging around it, you know!"

"He must have thought he was dreaming! Poor Henry! I can hear him saying: 'I swan!' "

"Exactly! He more than half believes in ghosts, and he thought he had found 'em that time, sure. Got down as fast as he could without falling and went after the minister."

Catherine drew a long breath. "He would recognize Margaret's doll, I suppose. Perdita does n't play with them. O deary me! How excited every one must have been! But O Bert, would n't you have loved to do it? Why did n't you and I ever think of such delightful plays when we were little?"

"I believe we could have if we'd known each other! I say, Catherine, it was downright silly of you to be sick such a lot and waste all that time we might have been doing things!"

Catherine laughed with pleasure.

"I'm well enough now, Bert. And I'm making up for lost time."

Bert's face clouded, unwarrantably.

"It's too late, now," he muttered. "We're all of us in for real life now with a vengeance. So this is where Alice lives, is it? It's a magnificent old place, all right, all right. Rather big for just two, I should say."

Bert's judgment was one in which every one who visited Elmknoll in those days concurred. The big house had served as a fitting background to Mrs. Langdon's stateliness. Now shy little Miss Matty, and Alice, quiet and mouse-like, shrank from the greatness of the rooms, and dwelt together in corners. Catherine, as she entered with the others, smiled at a suggestion of likeness between the little house the children had fitted up in the steeple and the alcove of the big living-room which Miss Matty and Alice had chosen for their usual sitting place, with small desk and sewing table, low chairs and a window full of plants.

Miss Matty received the boys in a sweet quaint manner which brought out in them instantly the half humorous and wholly tender respect which the young people of a day so different from her own instinctively accorded her.

Bert, at her request, lighted the fire in the big

fireplace, and, reinforced by numbers, Miss Matty abandoned her corner and allowed Karl to seat her in the midst of the circle, accepting his courtesies with a faint hint of color and the least little flutter, which made him declare her, under his breath, the dearest little party going, and turn to Catherine for a look of sympathy. He had hardly spoken to Catherine all morning, but he was vividly conscious of her presence, and absurdly sure that her view of all things that occurred would coincide wholly with his own.

"Shall I bring in the tea-tray, Miss?" asked Martha in the doorway.

Alice hurriedly assented, feeling ashamed that she had forgotten to order it, and grateful to Martha for the reminder.

Miss Matty's fingers fluttered too much, — far more since Sue's death, Alice noted sorrowfully, — so Alice made the tea and Karl and Bert handed the cups and the tiny lettuce sandwiches and thin slices of fruit cake.

The big clock on the stairs chimed slowly, then deliberately, reluctantly, struck — one — two — three — four — almost daring to stop there — but suddenly harshly clanging out the five, then sulkily retiring into silence.

"I'm no end sorry, Miss Hayward," Karl set his own cup, not tasted, on the table. "But my

train goes at five-twenty, and I've barely time to make it."

"Wait till six-forty and go up to Winsted with me for the night, Von Arndtheim," suggested Bert comfortably. "You ought not to get back to little Cambridge without a look at the real sights of the middle west!"

Miss Matty listened, and suddenly her face lighted up.

"Why don't both you boys spend Sunday here with me? In this great big house? It would be a kindness!"

A confused silence answered this unexpected invitation. Bert and Karl turned to the girls for help, the girls to Mademoiselle Corinne, but as Karl's eyes met Catherine's their hearts thumped with sudden happiness.

"We'd like nothing better, Miss Hayward," said Bert after a moment, "at least, I'm speaking for myself, and Von Arndtheim —"

"It would give me the greatest satisfaction," said Karl, and stopped, leaving his sentence in the air with the unspoken suggestion of a "but" about it.

Miss Matty looked relieved, but still a shade puzzled.

"Alice, Thomas can call for their things?"

"Certainly, Miss Matty," Alice assured her, but Hannah broke out:

"It will be too funny for anything to have you boys here over Sunday and us not able to see you!"

"Not able to see them?" Miss Matty's bewilderment was extreme. "But one reason I invited them to stay was because it seemed such a short visit, especially for Mr. Karl, all the way from Boston."

"Dear Miss Matty," Alice put her hand on hers, "it's just the college rule. That's all. But we never see men callers on Sunday, and they particularly disapprove of our Prom guests staying on over Sunday. You could give us permission, though, could n't you, Mademoiselle Corinne?"

Mademoiselle Corinne threw up her hands in a little gesture of horror.

"O my dear girl, I have made a vow unto myself, never to follow my own preferences or intuitions in giving permissions. It is all a mystery to me, your American ways in the first place, and Dexter college ways in the second. I could not take the responsibility."

Frieda got up.

"It is all foolishness. I shall go and telephone Miss Eliot. Wait here."

The others waited. Karl pulled out his watch and slipped it back with a shrug.

"I shall have to accept your invitation, at least, Wyman. If the powers frown on my staying

on here, you'll have to take me off with you. I've missed *my* train!"

"When I was young and went to school, we were not allowed to see young gentlemen at all," said Miss Matty, "but since you are allowed to on Friday and Saturday —"

"And all the other days of the week," put in Catherine. "I don't pretend to understand the rule, but I know they have one something like it in most girls' colleges."

"Miss Eliot would like to speak to you, Miss Matty," said Frieda, returning. "I told her what nonsense it was."

While Miss Matty was consulting with Miss Eliot, the young people sat staring into the fire, frankly admitting the importance to them all of the unheard colloquy going on in the distance.

"You may stay." Miss Matty came hurrying in, smiling and eager. "Alice, please send Thomas at once for their luggage. And you girls are all to come to dinner to-morrow after church. You may stay to dinner to-night, on condition that you are back at the college in time for chapel. I will tell Martha to have dinner served early. You have no other engagement, Miss Fasquelle?"

In the joyous hubbub that arose at the good news, Karl was conscious of Catherine's silence. He made his way over to her side while the others

were laughing over Bert's description of his recent emotions.

"I shall go up to Winsted with your friend Bert, to-morrow night then," he said significantly. "I am planning to study medicine with a view to practising in America, and I want to consult with your father about it."

"I thought you were going back to Germany in June," said Catherine.

"For the summer, perhaps. But not to stay. I have changed my mind about that quite recently!"

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

TRIUMPHANT HOSPITALITY

"It is such a satisfaction to have you two meet at last!" Catherine, sitting opposite Edith Allen and Mary Osgood in the station cab, put out a hand and squeezed a knee of each. "I've always kept you both in one compartment of my heart, you know."

"It's a very comfortable corner, I'm sure," laughed Polly. "Haven't you found it so, Miss Allen?"

"Indeed I have, but if we are such near neighbors as Catherine claims, we must n't call each other Miss. I'm sure my name is Dy-the on my doorplate in Catherine's heart, and yours is Polly."

"That's right," said Catherine with satisfaction. "Now are n't you wondering why I'm the only one to meet you?"

"A little," confessed Dy-the. "But I've always heard that college forgets you as soon as you are out, and I thought maybe you were the only one who cared to meet me, coming back. This is my first visit since I graduated, you know, except for stopping over a day with Miss Eliot the next

September, — when you brought Frieda, you remember."

"You're not entirely forgotten, Dy-the darling! In fact I hear you lamented on an average of once a week, at least. But the reason the whole college is n't out in force to greet you is that the maids have gone on strike and there 's a lecture to-night by a Frenchman who does n't believe in girls' colleges, thinks girls ought to know how to cook and such, you know, and that study spoils them for practical life."

"Dear me, how interesting! I did n't suppose there was a curiosity like that left alive," exclaimed Polly. "I'm going to take notes on him for my next Psych paper. Call it A Strange Survival."

"Do! His name is Blanchard, and Prexy seems to have a lot of respect for him. I asked Mademoiselle Corinne about him, and she said she had met him, but she would n't say anything more. I imagine she despises him because of his views. She would, of course."

"But what does he have to do with Hannah Eldred's staying away from my train?" Dy-the demanded. "And Hilda? And Margaret Warren?"

"Everything! The maids, all but one, struck two days ago, I tell you, and not another one to be had. Miss Watkins is nearly distracted. She

had a telegram from a Chicago intelligence office just now and they are going to send out a cook and some maids to-night, but they can't get here before ten. We've been doing the work ourselves."

"What larks! We're just in the nick of time. I'd like nothing better than to mess around in the kitchen!" Polly clapped her hands at the prospect.

"I'm not so sure!" said Dy-the doubtfully. "I've been doing housework at home for a month straight, and I had an idea I'd relish a change. How are you managing?"

"Systematically, of course! Margaret organized everybody into squads, bedrooms, corridors, classrooms, table waiting, cooking, — Miss Watkins does most of that, but she has to have helpers — dishwashers, dishwipers, and doortenders. Everybody's something. The only reason I could get away now was that I am to make the soup for dinner and the stock is all made and ready. You see, classes go on just the same, and so all the housework comes in at odd hours. Hannah hadn't dusted the parlors, and couldn't come, and Hilda is polishing silver."

"I should think that could go by the board for once."

"But not to-night. Don't you see? It's on account of the lecturer. Prexy invited him to dine at his house, but he expressly asked to be

entertained at the college. And we're going to keep the strike a secret from him and just overpower him with brilliant successes and then force him to admit that we're not educated out of usefulness."

Dy-the thrust her head out of the cab window.

"There's the chapel towering up over the lodge. Who rings chimes this year? That used to be my work."

"The funniest combination! Little Molly Fleming and the widow Barrows! Mrs. Barrows has a dreadful time keeping along in class, but she seems to like being here, and since they found out how beautifully she could do the chimes, she seems perfectly happy. And the funny little Flemings started in to tease her, but she was so kind and innocent they quite lost their hearts to her, and Molly tags her around all the time. They got acquainted in Alice's Cozy Corner, you know."

"That was a real inspiration, was n't it?"

"Like our Library at home," put in Polly. "I felt so proud taking Karl Von Arndtheim around and telling him all about the beginnings of it. It does n't look like a home-made library at all, Catherine."

"Hannah's Karl?" queried Dy-the, surprised. "What was he doing in Winsted?"

Catherine left the answer to Polly.

"O, the girls had him out for their Prom, and Bert Wyman was down and brought him home with him for a day or two. I know him, anyhow, — he has been out at Wellesley several times. He's a mighty nice chap. Not terribly handsome, not terribly anything, you know, but thoroughly nice, and good fun and solid and substantial. Everybody at Winsted liked him. He was over at your house to supper last night, Catherine. Father and Mother and I went over to call in the evening and found them all three sitting around the fire, visiting like old friends. O, I have a batch of doughnuts in my suitcase for you from Grandma Hopkins! I do wish our spring vacations ever came at the same time."

"If they had this time, you'd not have been able to stop here on your way back, though. That's the bright side to that! Here we are!" Catherine climbed out and held the door open for the others. "There's Margaret up in her room, waving! Are the potatoes boiling, Maggie? Here are two raw recruits I'm bringing. They'll do anything nobody else can. Your specialty in the Agora house was floor scrubbing, was n't it, Polly? Right upstairs, Dy-the. You know the way. Maria darling, won't you run down to the kitchen and tell Frieda some one she loves is

here? Wait here for her, Polly. I promised to let her know the minute you arrived. She'll bring you up to the room. I'll take the suitcases, and the doughnuts!"

M. Blanchard, the French lecturer, slight, immaculate, daintily mustached, inspected the half-open west door of Main Hall. He lifted the brass knocker and let it fall, then stood, waiting, and looking interestedly inside. Two young girls in voluminous aprons and stage dusting caps were very busy, one wielding a long floor brush, knocking awry with the handle the engravings hung along both sides of the hall, while her companion with a huge dust-cloth followed her closely, wiping up dust before it had a chance to settle, and talking animatedly.

"I don't know what Alice would say if she knew we had left this to the last. The reception room is thick with dust. On account of the afternoon sun, I suppose. Sunshine always draws dust so."

"Somebody certainly knocked. Why does n't any one answer? I hope they won't till we get through here."

"Hannah Eldred! You're doortender yourself. Don't you remember Clarinda asked you to see to it, so she could go down town?" Betsey

Fleming's duster flopped across her nose as she spoke and she sneezed loudly.

"Mercy!" Hannah dropped the floor brush and flew to the door, which she threw wide open, making the caller start back as it grazed his hat-brim.

"Won't you come in? Mademoiselle Fasquelle? She's in, I know. I did n't mean to keep you waiting. Please come into the reception room, and I'll take your card to her."

She ushered him in and left him to Betsey, who was plunging about the room trying to dust everywhere at once.

The caller watched the pretty little face and the flying duster, smiling. Betsey, much embarrassed, and conscious of his scrutiny, tripped over a rocker and fell.

"O, thank you! I'm not hurt at all. You did n't need to help me up. I'm always tumbling. I never break anything, any bones, I mean. I often break other things. That's why they would n't let me work in the kitchen or dining-room. Alice said I'd do less damage here, and every one has to do something."

"Indeed? Is it one of the customs of the college that the young ladies should do housework? I am surprised and interested."

"Mademoiselle Fasquelle begs to be excused."

Hannah, returning, spoke formally, then, seeing a look of surprise and annoyance on the gentleman's face, she added quickly:

"I'm sure she really wants to see you, but, you see, she's making mayonnaise, and she simply can't leave it, especially since she has such a reputation for salads."

"I understood," the caller replied, somewhat frostily, "that Mademoiselle Fasquelle was employed to teach young ladies French, and that this was a serious institution of learning."

"O, she does teach French," Hannah declared warmly. "And she is a wonderful teacher. We all adore her. But we like her salads even better than her classes."

"They are good, I confess! I had supposed her salad making was a strictly private function, however. May I ask just how she worded her message to me?"

Hannah smiled. "It was so funny! I went into the kitchen and it was all steamy and clattery and she was beating away, and her cheeks were flushed and her eyes bright, and I held out the card to her, and she shook her head and said very fast: '*Va-t-en, mignonne! Je ne verrais pas l'empereur de Chine à présent!*' So I *va-t-ened.* I knew you were n't the Chinese emperor. It is a very particular occasion, you see. Prexy is coming

"'I'm sure she really wants to see you, but, you see, she's making mayonnaise.'" — *Page* 250.

to dinner, and I promised Sibyl when I went through the dining room I'd come back and fill salt cellars for her. Betsey will explain to you, and you must please forgive Mademoiselle Corinne. She will surely see you as soon as she can." Hannah vanished, leaving Betsey to take up the tale.

The Students' Committee, in command at this crisis in domestic affairs, had determined not to tell the college at large about the lecturer and his peculiar views. It had seemed to them safer to keep that phase of the situation a secret, depending on an announcement that President MacArthur was coming to dinner to rouse every one to her highest point of efficiency, without the possibly disintegrating influence of the nervous excitement which might arise if it were made known that anything so tremendous as the fitness of college-bred women for domestic life was at stake! Therefore Betsey, who loved to talk and had dusted everything, settled down comfortably to entertain Mademoiselle Corinne's friend with a full account of the strike.

"It's two days now," she went on after outlining the facts, "and we've had the greatest kind of a lark out of it. Why, what do you think? Miss Eastman, the driedest-up creature you ever saw, can make waffles! She stood out there over

the stove and made waffles for the whole seventy-five of us, turning them out till you would have thought she'd drop! And when we had eaten all we could, some one started singing: 'Is there anything that we can do for you, Miss Eastman, how do you do?' You know, the way we sing for each other. 'We'll do the best we can and stand by you like a man.' And she came to the door, all hot and red, and smiled, a real truly smile! I shall never forget it, never." Betsey shook her head slowly as she reflected on the astonishing circumstance. "It taught me a lesson to judge not. And to-day in class when she knew the very last little 'a' and 'b' in the footnotes of the grammar without looking them up, and thought I ought to, too, I just shut my eyes and thought of those syrupy waffles and that inexperienced smile and forgave her. You never would have believed she had it in her! Now Miss Eliot is a wonder, anyhow, so nobody was so very surprised to have her make such delicious bread that you wanted more every bite you took. I heard Margaret telling Catherine that she always had thought it was easy for Miss Eliot to have high ideals, with nothing much to bother her, you know, just living here in the Hall, with no housekeeping cares and all that, but when she watched her master those loaves and loaves, she decided that

she would be calm and competent even if the pipes leaked and the children were all around under her feet."

The lecturer was giving Betsey much more earnest attention than his audiences were accustomed to give him. She went on now, hugging her knee, and taking a long breath for a fresh start.

"Mademoiselle Corinne is n't calm, but she can make things! She dismissed her classes this afternoon to meditate on her salad, she said. She says she has to dream them out, and this must be her *chef-d'œuvre*. We had that word yesterday, and so I knew what she meant, — masterpiece, you know. I hope she will finish in time to put on her lovely red frock for you. It's adorable, clinging *crêpe de Chine*, the most ravishing shade. The singing teacher is going to do the steaks with mushrooms, — you'd never expect it of her — she 's a high soprano! — And Teresa, she's the only maid who stayed, is going to fix the potatoes in a grand new way, and Miss Eliot made rolls. We all wished we could have more waffles, but of course you can't in a formal dinner menu, but I know Prexy would love them. Alice lives in town, Alice Prescott, I mean, and she 's brought her Martha over to help, and Mrs. Prexy promised to come over and bring her waitress. Of course, we girls all know how to serve. There

never was an American college girl who did n't know *that*. Church suppers at home, and clubs and things, you know. Girl babies are born knowing about one plate on a tray and holding things at the left. I'm not fifteen yet, and I perfectly loathe the sight of a little white apron. That's why I'm wearing this big lab one of Priscilla's."

"Do you enjoy housework, you young college ladies?"

"Enjoy it?" Betsey considered. "Why, I don't know. You don't enjoy work much, anyhow, do you? Studying and dishwashing and such things? You enjoy skating and dancing and shopping, you know. But work things have to be done, of course, and I do despise a girl who's always flunking or who can't make her own bed or do her own mending. It's as tiresome as a man's not knowing how to build a fire or drive nails straight. I know all about that. My father's a college professor and he put up the plate rail in our summer cottage, and did it with the little ridgy side underneath, and the sloping glossy side on top, where the dishes could slide off. And Mother simply *has* to run the furnace."

Betsey started up suddenly and ran out into the hall, coming back in a minute.

"I beg your pardon. I did n't mean to run

away and leave you, but Frieda was beckoning. She wanted to know where Catherine was. They want her to make the soup. It's a tremendous responsibility, but she's willing for the sake of the college. It's quite a different matter to make soup for your own family and to make it in *reservoirs* for a whole college, and a President. Faculty are such eaters, men faculty. I've always noticed that, especially Philosophy, and that's Prexy's chair. O here comes Mademoiselle Corinne!" and Betsey rose as did Monsieur Blanchard as the Lady of the Salad came into the parlors, her soft red gown trailing behind her over the not-yet-swept rugs.

M. Blanchard bowed low over the hand she gave him, and then turned toward Betsey, who would have slipped away.

"Pray present me formally. This young lady has given me much pleasure and instruction, and for her sake I am persuaded to forgive the salad its successful rivalry."

Dinner had long been over, the success in service and in quality that it deserved to be. The Chicago train had brought "professionals" to wash the towering piles of dishes. The college had sat respectfully through M. Blanchard's rather formal address, wakening to keen delight when, at its

close, he paid a charming tribute to the American college girl, her remarkable resourcefulness, her healthy attitude toward work of all kinds, her spontaneity, and, finally, her inborn skill in all domestic arts! They had cheered him mightily, and when they had marched out, a pretty procession of youthful figures, excessive coiffures, and dainty gowns, the lecturer turned to the President, who said:

"A courageous man is he who will declare himself wrong! But I did not flatter myself that my argument of the afternoon had been so powerful, Monsieur!"

"Your argument was excellent, my dear sir, but I have heard argument and statistics before, unmoved. I had, however, never before met a little Betsee Fleming!"

Up in 47 that night, lights were by special dispensation allowed to burn beyond ten o'clock, and Catherine was passing Grandma Hopkins' doughnuts while Dy-the poured coffee.

"It was dangerous to let you two serve," declared Hannah. "And cruel. Everybody wanted to hug Dy-the, and how could they when she had a soup plate in her hands! That man is going to speak at Wellesley before he goes back to France, Polly, and Mademoiselle Corinne will have to

have him call on you, to pay you for your work to-night. What a way to spend your one evening at Dexter!"

"I felt very much at home," declared Polly, "and it was no end fun. Is n't Mrs. Prexy delightful? That's one thing you miss if you have a woman president!"

"Miss Eliot forgot herself once and called me 'Dy-the dear' when she asked me to bring her something. And nice old Fräulein Meyer did n't recognize me at first, and when she did, she said a funny little German swear under her breath and tried not to look at me after that. But after dinner she waited in the hall and hugged me up to her tight, and that threw my head, with my cap still on, over her shoulder, and the French gentleman saw me. I wonder what he thought! O, girls, it's glorious to be back. I would n't be back to stay for anything, for after college is better yet, but don't I pity girls who've never been?"

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

VIOLETS

With the coming of spring, Miss Matty's delights began. For so long she had been shut up within the city, that she had almost forgotten what the first faint signs of spring were like. With breathless interest she watched the trees budding. The crocuses which began to prick through the lawn here and there when the snow was barely gone she greeted with reverent joy. She could scarcely wait for the pussy willows to grow properly fat and healthy before she was out after them by the little creek down the road. Alice and Martha worried over her excursions after flowers, fearing she might take cold or slip and fall, but no one could have had the heart to deny her the pleasures she had missed for so many years.

A rumor of violets was heard at last. It reached the college and the Elmknoll house on the same day, not marvellously, as Alice in her daily journey between the two places kept her eyes open and treasured up to report to her friends every tiding of spring she received.

Miss Matty with a big basket and trowel went out after her afternoon nap to verify the rumor for herself. She had a plan for a wild flower garden at home next year, fearing that the next spring might not find her quite so free to seek the woods. So she was busily transplanting, taking plants only from places where they could be spared, and carrying with each one plenty of the soil in which it was accustomed to live.

She was carefully digging up a violet plant on a sunny meadow slope where the leaves were so thick that only a fairy could have walked between them. From the other side of the little knoll came voices, but to Miss Matty's somewhat obscured hearing they were only a blur.

"I'd like to learn how to candy these," Frieda was saying.

"Why? To send to Karl's lady-love?"

"Yes! You may joke about it, if you like, Hannah, but I don't like his falling in love, even if it is with Catherine."

"Perhaps he has n't. It's early to be sure about it. Though I have n't any doubt, myself. I've seen him often enough with other girls, and he never looked like that. What I'm wondering about is her side of it."

"*Pfui!* There's nothing doubtlike about her side of it. Has she spoken of him once? Does

she not stay by herself half the time? And I found a piece of paper with her writing on it and rhyme words in a row left in the dictionary!"

The scorn in Frieda's voice made her seem to spurn the words as she uttered them. Hannah said nothing for a minute, and then answered seriously:

"That is pretty bad. She never wrote poetry. She said she loved it too well. She tried an Alma Mater song once, her freshman year, but the music committee said it would n't go to any but Gospel hymn tunes, and she stopped right there. She could n't make anything rhyme with Karl, anyway!"

"Of course not, but she had 'love' and 'above' and 'dove' and 'prove' on the paper."

"Truly? If she is rhyming 'dove' and 'prove' she is so far gone that there's no hope of her ever getting over it! You should have heard her jump into Pris for using 'lover' and 'clover' on one of the Valentine party place cards. And poor Pris was so rushed. There's no use fussing, Frieda. Karl and Catherine were predestinated, and you and I may just as well adapt ourselves to the new conditions! I'm going over where it's sunnier to pick. Why, Miss Matty! Frieda, here's Miss Matty!"

Miss Matty had laid aside the trowel and put

her bare hands into the hole to bring up the violet roots more tenderly. She set the plant in the basket carefully, brushed some of the black earth from her hands and turned around.

"O, is it you? I heard voices, but I did not recognize you. I hope you are both well?"

"Quite, thank you. And you, Miss Matty?" Hannah answered punctiliously, but her eyes were wandering over the field while Miss Matty answered.

"O," she cried, "I do believe those are bird-foot, over there. I'll get you some, Miss Matty. Let me take your trowel. There's a marshy place between, and you should n't go. You and Frieda stay here in the sun and rest yourselves."

Miss Matty consented, finding her back inclined to assert itself. She looked doubtfully at Frieda's morose countenance, so out of keeping with the bright spring day.

She put out her hand timidly and touched Frieda gently.

"Don't the violets make you glad, Frieda? You love the flowers as much as I do, I have thought."

"Nothing could make me glad to-day," Frieda answered suddenly. "Miss Matty, were you jealous when Mrs. Langdon married?"

Miss Matty blinked a little with surprise,

and Frieda went on without waiting for an answer:

"But it was different with you. You just loved *her*. But I'm jealous of them both. I love Karl more than I love Catherine, even. I don't want either of them to have the other!"

"O, I've found buttercups!" Hannah's shout rang out across the meadow. Miss Matty, hearing it, thought gently:

"And *she* loves them both, and finds that a reason for being glad that they have each other. Happy Hannah and poor little Frieda!"

Aloud she said:

"Frieda my dear, I do know how you feel, something about it at least. I remember the day Sue wrote me of her betrothal. Mr. Langdon put in a note, too." Miss Matty's cheeks grew pink. "He wished to assure me that her friends would in no way lose Sue. But I could not at first believe it."

"It was n't the same any more, was it?" asked Frieda, but with a note of hopefulness in her voice. Miss Matty hesitated again, then her kindness compelled her to answer fully, though it was distasteful to her to speak of her own deep experiences.

"It was not quite the same, perhaps. Sue loved Evelyn and me precisely as she had loved us

before, but it was plain to see that her affection for Mr. Langdon was different and greater. I think — Evelyn and I talked it over together — I think it was not her affection we felt deprived of, so much as her thought. Her mind was filled with new interests. It would have been very easy to shipwreck our friendship then. Sue was incapable of jealousy — I believe the greatest natures are, perhaps. She would have been impatient of a trace of it in us. By freeing my heart to Evelyn I succeeded in keeping that — taint — hidden from Sue. And in time I fought it out. It is an ugly disease, Frieda. It grows in love as hideous worms grow on roses, and it must be killed or the rose will die."

Miss Matty was very impressive now. The flapping straw hat she wore, tied under her chin, slipped back, and her sweet little old face was all earnestness, her eyes looking straight into Frieda's unhappy, wishful ones.

"There is no compromising with jealousy. Evelyn helped me conquer it, by prayer and Sue's great remedy, common sense" — a little smile paid tribute to the memories wakened by the words. "Then, when I had guided our boat of friendship around the rock of jealousy, there was still another danger. For Sue, as I told you, was taken up with her new connection. She did not

feel the need of us. We might have been sensitive and so have left her; or we, too, might have grown preoccupied. But I have always believed Providence granted me true wisdom just then, for I was led to see that faithfulness and patient waiting on my part could save the precious friendship for us both, and I undertook to address myself not to Sue's preoccupied mind, but to her fundamentally faithful heart, and by careful observance of all the rites of friendship, even when she forgot her part, I kept the fire on the altar burning. And after a while, when Sue was accustomed to her new life, and her heart and mind had grown great enough to hold the new love easily, she found herself recalling the old girl friends and we were close at hand with no selfish sense of injury or jealousy to make her ill at ease."

Miss Matty had quite glowed with the unusual excitement of expressing herself in figures of speech. Their quaintness was not lost on Frieda, but Miss Matty's meaning went directly to her mind, and demanded consideration.

She stooped now and picked up the basket, which that last plant had rendered something more than full.

"I'll carry this for you, Miss Matty. What do you use to kill worms on roses? Bordeaux mix-

ture? It would be better to use poison on worms than on violets, would n't it? Let's go across this way and meet Hannah at the stile. Does n't she look pretty sitting there, and sorting out her flowers?"

They reached Hannah presently and she held up a bunch of violets gayly:

"I'm going to send these to Cathy in a box with a poison label on it. Won't that be fun?"

Frieda smiled happily.

"I'm going to give her mine, tied up with the violet cord I've kept ever since Christmas. It was on the bunch Karl sent to me. I'll put them in the purple box and put the green oiled paper around them, too. Won't you put in a few of yours, Miss Matty, and then send your card with mine? She won't know just what it means, but we shall, you and I. I'm going to kill the worm and tend the altar flame and keep the ship from wrecking, but you'll have to help."

"You may always count on me, Frieda," Miss Matty assured her, with a serious little shake of her head. Frieda suddenly caught her hand and kissed it.

"Miss Matty," she said earnestly, "you are a hornet, no, I mean a trumpet,— no, that's not right, — a *trump!*"

CHAPTER NINETEEN

A BACON BAT

"*Herein!*"

Hannah shouted the invitation cheerfully over her shoulder and went on with the soliloquy which the knock on the door had interrupted.

"Two-fifty for gloves and twenty-five for just one handkerchief — I shall use cotton ones hereafter. How much *was* that veil? Come along in and sit down, why don't you, whoever you are?" She turned her head as she dropped a handful of change into a large china pig on her desk.

"O, Miss Eliot! I do beg your pardon. I thought of course it was a stude. I can't get up with my lap full, this way. It would mix the piles, you see. Won't you take the comfortablest chair, please?"

"Stude!" murmured Miss Eliot, selecting the comfortablest chair with deliberation. "That is truly the least lovely slang expression I have ever, in a long experience, been forced to hear! It is a comfort to reflect that that experience has taught me that most slang dies in the course of one college

generation, and the rest serves a useful purpose! I am a stud-*ent* at present, Hannah, with human nature for my field, engaged in research. I'm hunting for Hilda and Frieda. They were both in the dining-room at luncheon and both absent from history class this last period. Since Hilda moved in here, she has not forgotten her schedule so often, and as for Frieda, I consider her my main standby. She has the true historical temperament, inherited from her father, no doubt. I could not imagine a cause which would keep her away from class, and came in half expecting to find her stricken with paralysis. But I find you instead, counting out your money. I confess I am curious about your barnyard!"

Hannah had been arranging little piles of coins on the desk as Miss Eliot talked. She answered now readily:

"I don't know where the girls are. Catherine has gone to the train to see Dy-the off, but they did n't go with her. The animals are my banks. You see, I have different allowances. There's my clothes money. It's such a responsibility to have so much! And such a problem to spread it out over a whole month and remember underwear and shoes and such. And I don't know whether umbrellas and hairpins are clothes or not. What should you say?"

She was so serious that Miss Eliot repressed her own smiles:

"I never heard of umbrellas being worn, I think."

"That's so. But you do wear hairpins. Why did n't I think of that before? Then I can pay the umbrella man out of my general money. I must get it mended, because I had to go down town in the rain yesterday and I had solemnly promised Mamma I would n't wear anything that needed mending, and Papa that I would n't borrow, so I went bareheaded to save my hat. I was calling my umbrella clothes, you see, and I had n't a penny to pay for mending it!"

"You seem to have plenty there."

"But that's other kinds. I never mix them. I should never in this world get my accounts straight if I did! Papa tried to teach me to do my accounts in a book, and it took all my Saturday mornings to try to untangle them, so I got these banks, and don't have half so much trouble. You see — " Hannah was warming to her subject as she felt her visitor's interest. "The pig is clothes, appropriately, because you never would believe how much clothes cost. And the cow is my general spending money. And this nice St. Bernard dog is my rescuer, my emergency fund, which I am never, under any circumstances,

to spend. And my washing money — Dad says: 'Whatever else you economize in, don't let it be fruit or washing!' so I had him make a special appropriation for it, because it does n't come in on college bills, you know, and I could n't spare anything out of my other allowances — well, it 's here in this cunning frog. Books I buy at the college store and have the bill sent home. And once a week I unlock each animal and count him up and get my balance. I'm ninety-five cents off this time, but I think it 's probably apples. I'm always buying apples! I've been working ever since lunch and I can't remember anything else I've forgotten."

"It's a very nice system, indeed," said Miss Eliot. "Have Hilda and Frieda anything similar? I should n't be surprised if they had to omit classes now and then if they have!"

"O, I forgot you wanted them. Seems to me they *did* come in awhile ago. Why, yes, I heard them talking in Hilda's room. I hear them now!"

She started up to go to the door of Hilda's bedroom, but the door opened slowly of its own accord, and Hilda and Frieda backed slowly into the parlor, holding their heads cautiously erect.

"How — do — you — like — the — effect?" asked Hilda, stepping carefully backward. "Mine's

Berenice Fluffs, and Frieda's Lady Kitty Compton Curls!"

"I knew I could dress hair if I put my mind on it," said Frieda complacently. "I did my own and Hilda's. And now it must be time for History. Miss Eliot won't mind our being a little late, when she sees how styleful and handsome we are!"

As these last words came from her lips, Frieda, hand in hand with Hilda, wheeled slowly around to meet Hannah's startled eyes and then Miss Eliot's, full of twinkles.

The most comfortable thing about Miss Eliot, as all Dexter girls agreed, was her sense of values, her unfailing power of distinguishing between wilful sin and accidental. She grasped this situation at once, understanding perfectly the time-annihilating nature of hair-dressing, and because of her appreciation of their point of view the girls exerted themselves to see from hers how technically inexcusable was their absence from class, and agreed at once to the justice which, while it omitted a reprimand, decreed a zero mark for the missed recitation.

The subject, briefly discussed, was then considered closed, and Hannah, who had kept a discreet silence, felt free to remark:

"Those flossy fluffs look so much like nice

little sausagettes that they make my mouth water for a bacon bat. Can't we go out to the Botany pasture and have one? Now? All of us and Mademoiselle Corinne?"

Miss Eliot's assent to this proposal was as ready and unqualified as Hilda's and Frieda's, and active preparations were instantly begun. Frieda ran over to the little store on the corner to buy a glass jar of sliced bacon, a loaf of home-made bread and half à brick of butter, while Hilda packed into a big two-handled basket six paper plates, six tin cups, a supply of five-and-ten-cent-store "silver," olives, pickles, and marmalade. Hannah hunted through closets, bookcases, and the rooms of all her friends for the toaster securely wired to a yardstick, which served as a bacon broiler over bonfires. She found it in Helen Gray's room at last, and brought it triumphally back, little Maria following her.

"Mademoiselle Corinne has an Engaged up," she said to Hilda. "I'll write a note to slip under her door. You can take it and slide it right under the door, through the little crack, Maria darling! Would n't you like that?" And as Hannah dipped her pen to write she stooped to kiss Maria's plump brown cheek.

"There! 'Come over to the Botany pasture as soon as you can, please. I don't dare knock

over your sign. H. Eldred.' Hardly room for my name, but no matter. There, Maria, take it and run away to your *madre* when you 've tucked it under the door. The door with the piece of paper pinned on it. Good-bye, you good little *bambino!* That's what Frieda would call killing two flies with one clap," she went on as Maria trotted obediently away. "I was afraid she would want to go, too, and I hate to refuse her. Now, I'll leave a note here for Catherine to find when she comes back. Flossy and Pris and Margaret may dine at Prexy's all they like. I'd rather have a bacon bat with Miss Eliot and Mademoiselle Corinne, myself!"

Twenty minutes later the three girls waited by the stile for the teachers to come up.

"I wonder why they call this thing the Botany pasture, anyway," said Hannah, tossing pebbles up on the toaster and catching them as they came down.

"Miss Watkins told me it had been so called from time in memoriam," said Frieda. "The first botany classes used to get all their flowers here till the professor wearied and forbade their coming here any more."

"Funny and lazy of them!" commented Hannah. "I'd go the farthest far there was if I had such an excuse to get out. But those early classes

were queer anyway. They used to wear bonnets and shawls and bodices with buttons all up and down in front of their spinal columns."

"Still talking styles?" asked Miss Eliot, arriving.

"Anything so frivolous?" asked Mademoiselle Corinne in surprise. "The last time I saw Hannah she was arguing free will and the ultimate ground of moral obligation!"

"And the next time it may be Irish crochet or suffrage," declared Hilda. "Let me help you over, Miss Eliot." And giving Miss Eliot, who was a trifle stout, a friendly hand up the steps she recited in a singsong:

> "'Up three steps, down three to the ground,
> And once I am over, I turn around,
> And up and over and down I go.
> A stile is the nicest thing I know.'

That's one of Catherine's gems. Don't you admire its lucid simplicity?"

"Is *that* the poetry she's writing?" exclaimed Hannah, relieved. "I thought she was doing sonnets. You don't have to be in love to write child-garden verses. I could, myself. Listen!

> "I like to go on bacon bats.
> We always go without our hats.
> And when the bacon's frying nice,
> We eat it quickly in a trice!"

"Send it to a magazine, Hannah," advised Miss Eliot. "I've seen worse in print. At least your rhymes are perfect and your feet are faultless!"

"And her meaning is quite clear," said Mademoiselle Corinne. "I particularly value that. I have been reading mysterious poems lately which have made me fairly dizzy. For example:

" 'Weariful waters, have you heard a soul's hair tingling your veiled feet by?
I stand outside my keen body, yearning into you as I cry!'

But, girls, speaking of poetry, I have a letter to read to you. Is this the place where we are to have our little feast? Then suppose I read it to you, now, while we are waiting for Catherine? She and Alice can have it later."

They dropped into comfortable attitudes on the grass, and Mademoiselle Corinne perched herself upon a projecting rock and drew a letter from her blouse.

"It is from Hortense," she explained, "and has surprisingly good news. She has been writing verses for several years, and recently has been sending them to me for suggestions as to technique and the like. They have seemed to me unusually good. Her constant reading of the best French literature, and her own deep reserved nature and

sorrowful life have been of great value to her as a poet. And now after several disappointments, she has found a publisher willing to bring them out. I showed them to M. Blanchard when he was here, and he thought them decidedly promising, but Hortense did not wish any influence exerted in her behalf. It will be only a little volume, and will not make her famous, but is a real encouragement and pleasure. This is what she writes for you to hear:

" 'Do you think the dear Wide-Awake Girls would allow me to address an envoy to them at the end of the little book? I shall dedicate it, of course, to you and Miss Lyndesay, without whom' — hm!" Mademoiselle Corinne skipped a page or two of light graceful writing. " 'Please ask the Four and Hilda if I may. I have written a little English verse which I think will bring good luck to the book, and I should dearly love to address it to them, because of their sweet kindnesses.' "

" How perfectly dear of her!"

" And to put me in when I've owed her a letter for weeks!"

" Won't Catherine be happy?"

" And Alice!"

The three chattered excitedly about it, till Hannah's face fell and she said dolefully:

"Think how *Hannah* will look in a book of poetry! I respect my name, and I like it's being the same whichever end you begin to spell it, but I don't see why it could n't be prettier. There are so many pretty H's — Hilda, and Helen, and your name, Hester, Miss Eliot!"

Miss Eliot smiled comfortingly.

"Yours is a name that wears well, Hannah, and it has been in a poetry book already. Look on the first page of Lucy Larcom's Poems, some day! When you were in Stratford, did you notice Hannah Handy's tombstone in Trinity churchyard?"

"Not I! I walked off down to the edge of the river and watched a man punt. I got so deathly tired of graveyards!" Hannah's tone was heavy with reminiscent weariness.

"The next time you go you must look out for it. It is beside the path leading to the church from the street, on the right-hand side. She must have been a good housewife and ready with her broom, I think, for her epitaph, which she surely attended to personally, runs this way:

> " 'What faults in me you saw
> Pray strive to shun.
> And look at home!
> There's something to be done!' "

The others laughed, but Frieda shook her head. "I shall never laugh at a graveyard again. It

brings a fear upon me to think of them, though I met Tante Clara in one at Ventnor. I am hungry. Let's build the fire now. Catherine may not be coming."

They wandered about, gathering twigs and anything combustible they could find, built a tidy small fire, and while the basket was being unpacked and the bread cut and buttered, Hannah broiled her face and the bacon together, so intent upon her occupation that she jumped with violence upon hearing an acrid voice saying:

"I am sorry to have kept you waiting, Miss Eliot. Hannah, that bacon is burning!"

A gay flame had laid hold upon a curling strip of bacon hanging between the bars of the toaster, and was now running up the scorched yardstick handle. Mademoiselle Corinne saved the toaster and most of the bacon, while Miss Eliot, mystified but self-possessed, greeted the unexpected guest cordially and made a place for her out of range of the bonfire smoke.

"I should have come earlier," Miss Eastman explained, "if I had found your note. But you slipped it under the rug as well as under the door and it was by chance that I found it. Surely you understand that an Engaged sign does not refer to *you*, Miss Eliot. I should be glad to have you disregard mine at any time."

Miss Eliot answered cheerfully that she made it a rule never to "rap over" such a sign, because she believed the custom of doing so, which prevailed more or less among the girls, was most unfortunate.

Hannah and Hilda meanwhile were exchanging wordless comments on the situation which they felt themselves comprehending. Hilda asked at last, with elaborate indifference:

"Where did Miss Eliot pick you up this afternoon, Mademoiselle Corinne? We did n't dare rap over your Engaged."

"Mine? O, I believe I did leave it up when I went out. Such carelessness as that quite justifies any one in paying no attention to my signs. To think I might have missed this charming party if I had not chanced to meet Miss Eliot on the veranda as I came in from down town! I left my parcels in her room and came on without going upstairs at all."

"I see!" murmured Hannah, and then the bacon was done to a crisp and had to be eaten instantly. Hilda and Mademoiselle Corinne, who had drawn an accurate conclusion from Hilda's question, juggled the dishes and forks about so that Catherine, if she came, should not be wholly unprovided for. Frieda's unconcealed annoyance at the new turn of affairs, which she could not under-

stand, and which the others had no opportunity of explaining, only added to the seemingly unreasonable gayety of Hannah, Hilda, and the French girl who, however, tried to atone for laughing at poor Frieda by marked kindness of speech and touch and extra quantities of marmalade and pickles. Miss Eastman and Miss Eliot sat side by side on a ledge of rock and discussed philology over their bacon.

Presently across the stony pasture came Catherine, sauntering idly and pulling one by one the petals from a tiny little blossom which the early botany classes had year after year relentlessly labeled *Daisy Fleabane*. Catherine called it *Daisy!* She reached the group unobserved and tossing the last petal away as she came up behind Miss Eliot, she bent her head and whispered in that lady's ear:

"Loves me!"

Then she settled herself on the ground with a nonchalant: "Hello everybody!" and throwing her arm across Miss Eliot's lap leaned cozily back against her neighbor's stiffly placed knees, to start up with a surprised:

"Why, Alice Prescott, how very sharp your knees are!"

Looking over her shoulder as she spoke, she gasped and fell silent.

Even Miss Eliot's *savoir faire* deserted her at such a strain upon it. Hannah and Hilda choked. Frieda's face lighted swiftly and she ejaculated:

"The point of contact!"

Mademoiselle Corinne hastily filled the bread plate with food and passed it, with Hilda's fork and Hannah's knife, to Catherine, who meekly received it, and in a bewildered state not uncommon to those whose spirits dwell in castles of air, while their physical persons fill space on earth, devoted herself to the safe pursuit of eating, leaving Miss Eliot to repair damages with skilful conversation, and a suggestion that Miss Eastman accompany her across the field to inspect a curious geological formation.

Hannah, gathering up the fragments and helping pack the basket for its home-taking, was once more "smitten," as she phrased it, "with the poetical afflatus. And I never was in my life before till I crossed that stile, and it's borne in upon me that this is the last time. Remember that bacon begins with B!

"Bake, bake on, bake,
On thy sizzling toaster, B!
This is the day when the Wide-Awakes
Have made more breaks
Than ever in history!"

CHAPTER TWENTY

LEBEWOHL

THE last days of the college year flew by in the confusion which always attends Commencement. Visiting parents, Commencement rehearsals, examinations, elections, auctions of furniture, committee meetings, fittings and packing: a grand jumble, and then Priscilla and Margaret and Helen Gray and a dozen others, suddenly seeming dearer as a probably final separation drew near, had become bachelors of arts, the possessors of solemn parchments which none of them could read offhand, even their own names wearing an unwonted aspect in Latin and the accusative case at that.

The fathers, restless and proud but resolutely determined to do their whole duty, had succeeded in getting belated trunks checked and their families sorted out from other men's, and started homeward. The mothers, sympathizing with the fatigued graduates, grieving for them over the good-byes lightly said to the friends of four years' standing, and secretly marvelling at the good luck which had averted for so long the evils traditionally consequent upon bare heads and rubberless feet,

had made places once more in the home groups for the daughters long away, dreading for them the difficulties of readjustment, and hoping that those difficulties might prove mere figments of tired imaginations.

Alice had watched the others go away, with homesick longings for her own home and family, but little Miss Matty's sweetness had won her heart so completely that she could not have been content to leave her, and there were delightful prospects in store for her, she was certain.

Frieda and Karl had sailed promptly for Germany pledged to return in the autumn. Catherine, Hannah and Hilda had plunged at once into the summer programs of their various families. Mademoiselle Corinne had spent a month with Miss Lyndesay at Brookmeadow and then returned to France.

And now the summer was over.

Mrs. Eldred moved restlessly up and down the big study of her pretty Massachusetts home, followed by Hannah's Christmas collie. Mrs. Eldred was a dainty young woman, little and eager and blithe as her own daughter. Now in her "prettymost frock," her lovely soft brown hair done in the most becoming fashion, she confessed to herself as she paused before a mirror that she had seldom looked better.

"And never cared more about it," she finished. "For Edward's sake and Hannah's, and for all their dear sakes! How very slow they are in coming!"

She lifted a bunch of delicate pink cosmos from a vase and rearranged it. She picked up a magazine and laid it down. She hurried to the kitchen door and asked a question or two about the dinner. She put Sandykirk through all his tricks. Then she took up a position in front of the window and stood, frankly watching and waiting, peering down the street like a child.

"The steamer arrived at noon. I know the despatch by heart: 'Have dinner for nine. We are coming by first train. Edward.' Nine indeed! That means, besides our family, Clara and Catherine over from Brookmeadow, Alice — how I have enjoyed having that girl in the house this week! — Frieda and Karl — I cannot guess who the ninth is. They must have counted wrong or perhaps they have a surprise for me. Mine will be more of a surprise, though, for mine is two. Dinner for nine, indeed! Dinner for eleven! I wonder if those dear ladies are ready to come down now. I'm sure the steamer people must be in on the 5:10, no matter how the customs may have delayed them, and it is more than likely that Clara took Catherine over. She has never

seen a ship come in — and however serene she has seemed all summer, she can't fail to be eager over Karl's coming. There! I hear them on the stairs."

Down the stairs they came, Dr. Helen Smith and Alice Prescott's shy but radiant mother. Mrs. Eldred hastened to meet them and put them into comfortable chairs, chattering gayly as she did so:

"I have n't felt so young in years! But I almost wonder whether it is safe to surprise Alice so. It is a year since you have seen her?"

"A whole year." Mrs. Prescott's thin hands clasped and unclasped themselves over her close black gown. "She will be able to stand joy, I think. She is a plucky little girl."

"Indeed she is!" The other mothers agreed heartily. Then Dr. Helen added:

"I am most fearful for Frieda. Leaving her mother and father will have been a wrench, and when she sees all the other girls with their mothers, she may be very homesick."

"I know." Mrs. Eldred's face lost a trifle of its brightness. "But Frieda, whatever she is, is never what is expected. She may not take that to heart at all. Surely she is coming back to America because she loves it, for it was left to her to decide, Marie wrote me."

"I think she was n't wholly pleased with the record she had left behind her here, and wished to improve it," said Dr. Helen. "I have seen Miss Eliot occasionally this summer, and she seemed to be in constant communication with Frieda, much to her own surprise, for the child barely spoke to her in college."

"Another unaccountable streak. She professes to adore Clara Lyndesay and has not written to her once since leaving. Ah! I wonder if that's not the carriage?"

It was not, nor was the next one. But suddenly a street car stopped at the corner. Mrs. Eldred, watching idly, cried out, and the other mothers joined her at the window.

"They are hoping to surprise me," she said, drawing back into the curtains. "Are n't they funny, coming single file, all of them loaded down with hand luggage? I thought I had cured Frieda of the bandbox and birdcage habit. The four girls in a bunch, and Karl with Clara — very circumspect of him, I'm sure" — she smiled into Dr. Helen's eyes, which smiled back at her. "And Edward with — can I believe my senses? — with Marie Lange herself!"

They were on the porch by this time, the four girls, and they met Mrs. Eldred in the hallway, but she pushed by them all, by Karl sweeping his

hat from his head as she passed, by Clara Lyndesay, by her husband, and caught the little German woman in the squatty hat into her arms.

The girls watched for a minute, then droppped their bags — Karl and Mr. Eldred looked like packhorses staggering under Frau Lange's freight, — and Hannah threw open the portières saying:

"Come on in, girls, and rest before you take off your hats even! Aunt Clara goes first, because she's oldest, then Catherine and Alice — what's the matter?"

Nobody answered, and she and Frieda and Karl crowding after the others stared in bewilderment. Dr. Helen's ample figure was quite eclipsed by her daughter's and Clara Lyndesay's embracings, and apart from them Alice clung, sobbing, to the neck of the tall woman in black who held her close and soothed her with tender words and little mother murmurs.

Mrs. Eldred presently collected herself enough to warn her guests of the approach of the dinner hour, and there was a general scattering for preparation. They gathered again very soon in the parlor and marched out to dinner, each mother on her daughter's arm, Mr. Eldred escorting Miss Lyndesay, and Karl closing the ranks with Sandkirk as companion.

"Now," said Mr. Eldred when the soup-plates

had vanished and the vital questions of rare or well-done had been pronounced and settled, "I propose an orderly explanation of the causes contributing to this very satisfactory situation. Suppose we begin with the remotest comer. Frau Lange, account for yourself, if you please."

All turned attentive smiling faces to the little German lady, who answered readily in precise book English:

"My husband was invited to join a party of scientists on a voyage to Assyria, his historical specialty, and he consented to go. That distressed Frieda, who offered to give up her heart's plan of returning to America and going to Vassar College, rather than leave me alone for three months. I could not consent to such a sacrifice, and I am therefore here. I shall hire a room near the college and become acquainted with college ways."

"Delightful!" "And you shall visit us at Dexter!" "And at Winsted!" "And at Brookmeadow!" "But surely, Marie, you must spend most of the time with me!" Mrs. Eldred's plaintive tone set the others laughing, and Frieda remarked:

"I brought Mütterchen along that I might have her myself! If you run away and leave me, little Mother, I shall tell them how you thought

I had learned to drink water because I was going to *Wasser* College, and that was one of the entrance requirements!" Frieda's tone and affectionate look more than took the teasing edge from her words. Miss Lyndesay listened thoughtfully. "She has become her mother's friend as well as her daughter," she said to herself, then turned to hear Mr. Eldred call upon Mrs. Prescott for her story.

"Mine is a story of kindness," she replied happily. "When Miss Matty wished Alice to come on here and visit Hannah with Catherine it was not easy for Alice to do so, because she had not been at home for a year, and it seemed to her that, if she were to leave Miss Matty, she ought to go home. She wrote me and asked my advice, and I told her it was most ungracious to quarrel with a gift, and that she should accept Miss Matty's goodness gladly and enjoy the visit. That she did easily. It was easy for me to advise her also, because I had a secret of my own. Miss Matty had also written me, inviting my Cora to make her home with Alice and herself this next year and attend college. We could manage the needful funds for clothes and tuition, and Cora is more than anxious to be a Dexter prep, preferring that to High School at home."

"Glorious!" cried Catherine with a quick glance

at Alice; but Alice had heard all this story upstairs as she dressed for dinner, and only answered Catherine with a serene smile, while Mrs. Prescott continued:

"As Alice was expected back the first of next week, Cora and I came on to Miss Matty's to be there when she arrived. The Doctors Smith came over from Winsted in their automobile bringing Madam Kittredge, who takes great pleasure in such journeys. At dinner, Mrs. Smith told us that Mrs. Eldred had desired her to join the girls here, and had said in her letter that she would give a great deal to have Mrs. Lange and myself also present. That gave dear Madam Kittredge an inspiration, and she persuaded me to leave Cora with Miss Matty and come on to you. She said that she would like nothing better than to see you all together here, and since she could not do so, even if she were here in person, she would send me instead to use my eyes for her. So she is looking at you all through my eyes!" It must have been a blurred vision, however, for a happy tear or two refused to be suppressed, and Mr. Eldred quickly turned to Dr. Helen, saying:

"The rest of us are present for obvious reasons, and I judge Mrs. Prescott has answered for you also, Dr. Smith, but perhaps you have something to add?"

"Wait, do, Edward," begged Mrs. Eldred. "I want to know how many lumps everybody wants and I shall be confused if any one talks while I'm pouring! None, Mrs. Prescott? Two, Marie? One, I know, for Dr. Helen, and also for Clara. And you children ought not to know how many you want, so I'll put them on the saucer and let you experiment. There!" as the waitress set the last cup down in its proper place, "that is all, Matilda. I will ring if we need anything."

The others had shown some surprise at Mrs. Eldred's words and manner, and now gave their attention to Dr. Helen with a vague feeling that it would be worth while. She hesitated a minute and then said:

"It is a pity to do this without my husband, but I am afraid there may not be another opportunity when so many of our dear friends are together. So in his name and my own I wish to tell you that — O, Karl and Catherine, tell them yourselves. I can't!"

There was no need of telling. Hannah dropped her napkin and ran around to Catherine and embraced her. Frieda shook hands with Karl like mad. Frau Lange beamed, and Mrs. Eldred and her husband exchanged a long look of clear delight. Mrs. Prescott's tears of happiness overflowed quite and stopped entirely, and Alice sat

with her hands clasped tightly, and whispered: "So much to be thankful for and only one heart to be thankful with!"

As for Catherine and Karl, they were the orthodox blushing lovers, in the sight of those who loved them, at least, a goodly pair. Hannah, sitting on Catherine's lap, felt for her left hand which she had hidden behind her, and brought it up to view, with its shining stone.

"Anyhow, Karl gave us solitaires first, did n't he, Frieda?"

"Indeed he did," Frieda answered heartily, "and I think pink corals are more loverly than diamonds. It was only because there were two of us, Catherine, that he chose you. He could n't be a bisogynist!"

"You 'll have to invite us to the wedding! Mademoiselle Corinne and Monsieur Blanchard asked Betsey Fleming to theirs!" Hannah rattled on.

"We 'll be bridesmaids, and borrow Miss Matty's pink gown and Madam Kittredge's!"

"And Alice will be maid of honor, and Mr. Kittredge will marry you —"

"And Perdita Osgood for flower girl, unless she 's too grown up by then —"

"And Catherine gets the green quilt —"

"Hush, children!" cried Mr. Eldred. "We must have a speech from Karl."

"Speech! Speech!" begged the others, and Karl stood up, straight and tall and honest-eyed, and looked into their friendly faces.

"It will have to be a long engagement, as I'm just beginning my professional study, but the father and mother doctors agreed with us that it was a farce to pretend we were n't engaged. *I* was, from the time I captured Catherine's dance card, and as for her, she can't deny that she allowed me to capture it!

"It is a great satisfaction to see that you all approve. I don't know a better start for a young man and woman than the honest approval of a circle of such friends as you. I'll do my best to keep your favorable opinion, you may be sure.

"My parents send you all hearty greetings.

"And I wish I could tell you right now how I thank you, every one: dear Frau Lange for her sympathy away back in Berlin days when I used to fill her apartment with lamentable strains of woful music, Mr. Eldred and Mrs. Eldred for their interest and help in my coming to America, Miss Lyndesay for a thousand kindnesses, Alice for the shrewd managing which gave me a few minutes' tête-à-tête with Catherine that Sunday at

Elmknoll, Dr. Helen for her straightforward way of taking the situation when I broke it to her and her husband, and for her sensible sympathetic letters all summer — yes, I corresponded with her mother rather more steadily than with Catherine! There! Have I thanked you all? The absent fathers deserve a share, and I am sure Mrs. Prescott would have helped it on, if she had had the chance. I can see it in her eyes! Now, where are those blessed *Kinder?*"

They had slipped away for a minute while he was talking, and now appeared in the doorway, hand in hand, each bearing a handful of letters and a little jewelry box.

"He forgot us!" they declared tragically.

"Skipped right over us and our treat and everything!"

"Us, who are responsible for the whole match!"

"But we forgive him."

"And we return to him his letters."

"Just alike in two languages!"

"And our rings."

"We have outgrown them!"

"But we keep his pictures, because some day we may want the frames for somebody else's!"

They extended the parcels melodramatically, and Karl took them, laughing, as Catherine exclaimed:

"Have you nothing to give me? Not even poisoned violets?"

Hannah and Frieda exchanged glances and then, maintaining their gravity by a mighty effort, they answered solemnly together:

"Just our pity, dear. We know him!"

THE END

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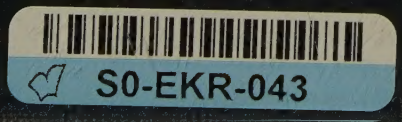
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